

## 1.6 Governance and Management.

---

14 *Del. C.* §§ 512(1)-(2), (6) and (9)

### Charter Management Company

**(Note! If the applicant plans to contract with a Charter Management Company, the applicant must complete the Charter Management Company and Highly Successful Charter School Operator Supplement in addition to the application narrative. The Supplement includes the Highly Successful School Operator Capacity section as well as the Portfolio Review and Performance Record section.)**

Sussex Montessori School will not be entering into a contract with a Charter Management Organization.

### Legal Status and Governing Documents [14 *Del. C.* § 512(2)]

1. **Identify the name of the organizing corporation, date of incorporation, and names of the corporation’s officers and the office held by each.**

Name of Organization: Sussex Montessori School, Inc.

Date of Incorporation: 4/4/2017

Officer’s Names and Titles:

- Linda Zankowsky, Chair
- Christine Carrino Gorowara, Co-Vice Chair
- Patricia Hermance, Co-Vice Chair
- E. McCrae Harrison, Secretary
- Mark Conces, Treasurer

2. **Attach a copy of the Articles of Incorporation, a copy of the Board bylaws, and Board policies of the corporation as Attachment 10.**

**Pursuant to 14 *Del. C.* § 512(1) and (2), the bylaws must be consistent with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act, 29 *Del. C.* Ch. 100 (related to public bodies, public records, and open meetings) and provide for representation of the school’s educators and parents of students on the Board.**

**The by-laws must demonstrate that the Applicant’s business is restricted to the opening and operation of charter schools, before school programs, after school programs, and educationally-related programs offered outside of the traditional school year.**

Bylaws reflecting the above, along with the articles of incorporation and conflict of interest policy for Sussex Montessori School, are included in Attachment 10.

**3. Provide, as Attachment 11, the completed and signed Compliance Certification Statement.**

We have provided the signed Compliance Certification Statement as Attachment 11.

**4. Provide, as Attachment 12, the completed and signed Application Certification Statement.**

We have provided the signed Application Certification Statement as Attachment 12.

**Governing Board [14 Del. C. §§ 512(1)-(2), (6) and (9)]**

**1. Governance Philosophy. Explain the general philosophy of governance that will guide the proposed school, including the nature and extent of involvement by key stakeholder groups. Please make sure to distinguish management versus governance responsibilities.**

The Sussex Montessori School Board is committed to the development of opportunities for children to explore and learn through the Montessori learning model. The organization originated as a group of parents whose children attended the Elementary Workshop, a Wilmington, DE-based Montessori school who formed a non-profit organization, Montessori Works, that advocates for the Montessori method as an educational option for children throughout the state, particularly focusing on access to Montessori in the public schools. Montessori Works supported the creation of Montessori Academies at Christina (MAC), which operates a Montessori school-within-a-school model in two buildings in the Christina School District, as well as the public charter school First State Montessori Academy (FSMA), which Sussex Montessori School is modeled after. Members of the Montessori Works Board serve as the Sussex Montessori School Founding Board.

The Sussex Montessori School Founding Board has taken on the responsibility of preparing and submitting the charter application, and in 2018, will take on the three following primary responsibilities:

- Identifying and hiring a school leader
- Identifying and securing a school site
- Identifying and recruiting Sussex Montessori School Operational Board members who will assist as the board transforms from a founding board to the board of an operating charter school

To continue this commitment, the Sussex Montessori School Board Founding Board will identify individuals to serve on the Sussex Montessori School Operational Board in 2019 and beyond who are similarly dedicated to increasing access to Montessori education for children in Delaware.

Management of the school, including oversight of the budget, finances, human resource management, and student and teacher behavior will reside with the school leader and staff, who will ultimately report to the Sussex Montessori School Board.

2. **Structure and Composition. Describe the size, current and desired composition, powers, and duties of the Board. Identify key skills, areas of expertise, and constituencies that will be represented on the Board. Explain how this governance structure and composition will help ensure that:**
  - a. **The school will be an educational and operational success; and**
  - b. **There will be active and effective representation of key stakeholders. (Note: Pursuant to 14 Del. C. § 512(1), the Board must ensure representation by an educator from at least one of the charter schools operated by the Board and at least one parent of a student enrolled in a charter school operated by the Board.)**

The Sussex Montessori School Founding Board currently consists of 9 members.

Expertise on the Board includes:

- 5 who work in education, including a current public school Montessori teacher, a current public school special education teacher, a former charter head of school, a former independent Montessori head of school, and two teacher preparation professionals
- 1 banker
- 1 employment specialist
- 2 Sussex County real estate agents

The SMS Board is expected to consist of 3-10 members, including:

- At least one Sussex Montessori School teacher
- At least one Sussex Montessori School parent
- Community members, some of whom will have expertise in finance and/or law,

Two Sussex Montessori School Founding Board members live in Sussex County and are anticipated to also serve on the Sussex Montessori School Board beyond the founding year. Additional Founding Board members with special expertise or interest may also join the Board beyond the founding year.

3. **Roles. Describe the primary roles of the Board and how it will interact with the Principal/School Leader and any advisory bodies. List all currently-identified Board members and their intended roles, and summarize their interests in and qualifications for serving on the school’s Board.**

The Sussex Montessori School Board will oversee the school leader’s roles and responsibilities, and the school leader will ultimately be accountable to the Board. We anticipate that the Board will consist of persons with expertise in the areas of law, finance, education, the Sussex County community, and communications/public relations.

The current board members are as follows:

- Linda Zankowsky, Chair  
Dr. Zankowsky has been a school leader both in the public sector and at an independent Montessori school, and is currently the director of an early learning center. She is also a Montessori parent.
- Christine Carrino Gorowara, Co-Vice Chair  
Dr. Gorowara is a teacher educator and a former Montessori parent.
- Patricia Hermance, Co-Vice Chair  
Ms. Hermance is a former Delaware charter head of school, and currently works with teacher professional development.
- E. McCrae Harrison, Secretary  
Ms. Harrison is a longtime Montessori educator who has served as both teacher and head of school.
- Mark Conces, Treasurer  
Mr. Conces is a finance professional and a former Montessori parent.
- Jessica Crampton Bradley  
Ms. Bradley is the grandparent of young children, a Sussex County real estate agent, and is active in the Sussex community.
- Jesse Reeves  
Mr. Reeves is a human resources specialist, a former Montessori parent, and a longtime member of the Sussex Montessori School founding organization, Montessori Works.
- Scott Richardson  
Dr. Richardson is a special educator and an educational researcher as well as a Montessori parent.
- Sean Steward  
Mr. Steward is a parent of young children, a Sussex County real estate agent, and is active in the Sussex community.

**4. As Attachment 13, provide a completed and signed Charter School Board Member Information Form for each proposed Board member.**

We have attached completed Charter School Board Member Information Forms for all nine Sussex Montessori School Founding Board members.

5. **As Attachment 14, provide a completed and signed Charter School Board Member Disclosures Form for each proposed Board member.**

We have attached completed Charter School Board Member Disclosure Forms for all nine Sussex Montessori School Founding Board members.

**Procedures. Explain the procedure by which Board members have been and will be selected. How will the Board fulfill its responsibilities? What will be the planned frequency and focus of meetings? Identify any standing subcommittees the Board expects to have. Describe how the school and Board will comply with Freedom of Information Act, 29 Del. C.Ch. 100 (related to public bodies, public records, and open meetings).**

**Board member selection:** The Sussex Montessori Founding Board members are members of the Montessori Works, Inc. Board who have been working in various capacities for the past several years on laying the groundwork for this charter application. They bring a wealth of experience and commitment to accessible Montessori education to the board.

In addition, anticipating the Montessori Works board members' role as founding board members for Sussex Montessori School, members have been recruited in recent years who are from the Sussex community, and/or who have specific areas of expertise such as real estate, finance, legal, and educational.

Ongoing board member selection will continue to identify individuals active in the Sussex community, particularly prospective Sussex Montessori School parents and teachers, as well as members with the expertise described above. Prospective board members will be asked to submit a résumé for consideration, and may meet with existing board members in person prior to a vote on their membership to the Sussex Montessori School Board.

**Meetings:** The Sussex Montessori School Board will hold regularly scheduled meetings once a month and special meetings as needed. Upon approval of its charter application, Sussex Montessori School meetings will be open to the public, subject to the requirements of the State of Delaware Freedom of Information Act and Open Meeting Act. Agendas and notification of its meetings will be published at least 7 days prior to the meeting. The Board will also publish its financial statements and minutes on its website for open inspection.

**Committees:** The bylaws of the Sussex Montessori School Board calls for five standing committees: Executive Committee, Finance Committee, Governance Committee, Development Committee, and Academic Excellence Committee. The bylaws also establish the role of the Board treasurer to act as liaison to the Citizen Budget Oversight Committee.

## 6. School Oversight

- a. **Describe how the Board will approach its oversight role. Describe the metrics or progress indicators that the Board will consider in its analysis of the school, as well as how the Board will receive this information (i.e., dashboard) and from whom (i.e., Principal/School Leader, Business Manager, committees). Be sure to include both the academic, financial and operational metrics, and the frequency with which the Board will review these metrics.**

The Sussex Montessori School Board will oversee the activities of the school leader, who will be subject to an evaluation process. This evaluation process will include three quarterly informal assessments of school operations and one annual formal evaluation. The school leader will prepare reports on selected metrics for the Board.

Performance metrics for the position will include:

- School open and closes on time and as expected on a daily and annual basis
- School meets DOE compliance requirements for charters school per DOE regulatory guidance
- School sustains and/or grows student enrollment over the course of the school year
- Individual student performance shows expected growth
- Low absentee and student discipline cases
- Low vacancy and turnover rates of personnel
- Ongoing offerings of professional development
- Authenticity of the school program to the Montessori approach (see part e. below)

Additionally, the Board will rely on the Citizen Budget Oversight Committee to report on financial indicators as described in the Delaware Financial Performance Framework.

- b. **Describe the financial policies and procedures that the Board and administration will implement and follow in order to ensure that the school remains fiscally solvent and that appropriate internal controls are implemented.**

**Governance:** As noted above, the bylaws establish a standing Finance Committee as well as the role of the Board treasurer as liaison to the Citizen Budget Oversight Committee.

**Accountability:** It is the intent of the Sussex Montessori School Board to ensure that a) no audit findings of significant or material nature are identified in any post-transactional audits; b) that no conflicts of interest exist in the procurement of goods and services; and c) that management controls are in place to ensure that there is no conflict of interest, malfeasance or financial improprieties.

All appropriate financial transactions will be transacted through the First State Financial System and all payroll and other personnel functions will be performed through the State of Delaware’s Payroll Human Resources Statewide Technology. All financial transactions, budgets, financial reports and audits will be posted on the Sussex Montessori School website within one week of approval by the Board.

- c. **Describe an, at a minimum, annual process for evaluating whether financial allocations have effectively supported the school in carrying out its mission and meeting its goals.**

The Sussex Montessori School Board will approve a five-year budget based on projected enrollment targets for the school, and on alignment of the proposed budget to the goals and mission of the school. This will serve as a planning tool and will be adjusted each year to reflect changes in expected enrollment.

The Board will approve an annual budget for each approaching school year at the close of the Choice Period (January) with revisions performed after the required April 1 submission of the enrollment data to the Department of Education. The budget will be adjusted based on the enrollment and unit count determination after April 1. A subsequent revision will occur after the official unit period ending September 30. The budget will be reviewed against actual transactions each month.

- d. **Identify the enrollment threshold that would compel the Board to delay opening the school and explain why.**

Sussex Montessori School is projecting 260 students to be enrolled in Year 1, growing to 455 students by Year 4. The school intends to meet at minimum 80% of its projected enrollment (208 students) in order to maintain financial sustainability.

Aside from enrollment, the two factors affecting the opening of the school is school building readiness and obtaining qualified Montessori teachers.

- With respect to the building, the Sussex Montessori School Board has prepared facility schematics to understand the capital needs of the school and has identified several promising sites. The Board will evaluate these options after our April approval and inform the Department of Education of our progress.
- With respect to the availability of certified teachers, Montessori Works, Inc. is developing a Montessori certification pipeline program in partnership with the University of Delaware. The program, which is funded through the Longwood Foundation, is designed to advance the certification for public school teachers who are interested in expanding their range of skills and potential career opportunities. A number of teachers for Sussex Montessori School will go through this certification program. In addition, Montessori Works is well-networked through the country to find available teachers.

- e. **Describe how the Board and School Leadership Team will utilize the school’s mission in everyday practice and decision-making?**

The Board will use the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector’s rubric (<http://www.public-montessori.org/resources/ncmps-rubric-essential-elements-montessori-practice-public-sector>) to evaluate the school program with the school leader and ensure that it maintains its authenticity to the Montessori approach.

- f. **Describe the School Leader contract. Identify whether there will be performance targets in that contract and, if so, what they are.**

As noted above, performance targets for the school leader will include:

- School open and closes on time and as expected on a daily and annual basis
- School meets DOE compliance requirements for charters school per DOE regulatory guidance
- School sustains and/or grows student enrollment over the course of the school year
- Individual student performance shows expected growth
- Low absentee and student discipline cases
- Low vacancy and turnover rates of personnel
- Ongoing offerings of professional development

7. **Board Improvement. Explain the plan for increasing the capacity of the Board. What kinds of orientation or training will new Board members receive? Describe how the Board will evaluate itself and what steps it will take to continually improve its capacity to govern. Describe how current and future Board members will comply with any statutory or regulatory requirement related to the training of Board members.**

All Board members will be required to participate in a Department of Education-approved program for financial accountability and special education legal requirements. In addition, the Sussex Montessori School Board will contract with the Delaware Association of Nonprofit Agencies (DANA) to obtain training on Board activities, including:

- Marketing and Communication of your Mission
- Program Evaluation and Outcomes Measurement
- Human Resources and Volunteers
- Fundraising
- Finance & Legal
- Public Advocacy, Affairs, & Policy
- Governing Body Development
- Succession Planning

- Customer/Client Service
- Sustainability/Organizational Life Cycles

Board training would be done during the founding year, the second year, which would be the first year of the operational board, then every three years thereafter, which would ensure that all board members would be trained sometime during their three-year terms.

- 8. Board Continuity. Describe how, and on what timeline, new Board members will be recruited and added. Explain how the Board will screen successor members of the Board to ensure continuing compliance with the requirements that the Board be qualified to operate a charter school and to implement the school’s proposed educational program.**

As the school matures, we anticipate recruiting Board members from an ever-increasing pool of business, community and parent volunteers. As the bylaws indicate, Board members will be added each year, and after the founding year will have three-year terms. Prospective Board members will submit résumés to the serving Board for their consideration. As noted above, all board members will be trained at least once during their three-year terms.

- 9. Ethics and Conflicts of Interest. Describe the Board’s ethical standards and procedures for identifying and addressing conflicts of interest and compliance with the State Code of Conduct.**

The Sussex Montessori School Board Conflict of Interest Policy is included in Attachment 10. All Board members will complete and sign the Sussex Montessori School Board Conflict of Interest Questionnaire.

#### **Advisory Bodies [14 Del. C. §§ 512(1)-(2) and (6)]**

- 1. Describe any advisory bodies or councils to be formed, including the roles and duties of these bodies. Describe the following: the planned composition of the advisory body; the strategy for achieving that composition; the role of parents, students, and educators (if applicable); and the reporting structure as it relates to the school’s governing body and leadership.**

The Montessori Works, Inc. Board will serve as an Advisory Board for the purpose of fundraising and development, and for ensuring the integrity of the Montessori educational model.

#### **Grievance Process [14 Del. C. § 512(9)]**

- 1. Explain the process that the school will follow should a parent, student or staff member have an objection to a governing board policy or decision, administrative procedure, or practice at the school.**

All teachers, staff and parents are encouraged to share their concerns about the operations of the school with the school leader. The school will have a process for the filing of grievances which will include interviews with the school leader, written documentation to support claims and if necessary, observations of individuals in question.

The school leader will share with the Sussex Montessori School Board all incidences of filed grievance and infractions of state law or regulations as soon as practicable. The Sussex Montessori School Board will not act unless requested by the school leader. Parents and teachers will have an opportunity to appeal to the Sussex Montessori School Board if there is a claim of inaction or lack of due process on the part of the school leader , which will issue an initial decision of whether or not to hear the grievance.

If the school leader is subject to the grievance, interviews with all of the actors will occur by the Sussex Montessori School Board. The Sussex Montessori School Board will be notified of the incident and take appropriate action.

Any action which constitutes criminal activity will be referred to law enforcement authorities immediately, for which the criminal justice process will take precedent.

## **2. Identify the goals of the Board of Directors in terms of monitoring and resolving staff and parent complaints.**

The goals of monitoring and resolving staff and parent complaints are two-fold:

- To provide appropriate and timely due process for students, parents and teachers in incidences which impact a child's learning opportunity;
- To allow constructive dialogue to occur to improve the school's delivery of its program. All complaints will be view within a framework of how the school can improve its delivery of quality education to the students.