

1.7 Parent and Community Involvement

14 *Del. C. §§ 512(1) and (6)*,

Parent Involvement

1. Describe the role of any parents/guardians and community members involved in developing the proposed school.

Sussex Montessori school recognizes that parents and community stakeholders who care about their child's education will be fundamental to ensure the success of Sussex Montessori School. During the application process, we have increased the awareness of parents and guardians about the school and to activate the community via community meetings and social networking to share about Sussex Montessori School with friends and colleagues. At the time of this application, Sussex Montessori School has identified 30+ potential volunteers, 70+ community members to continue sharing about the school with friends and colleagues, and 17 community members who are interested in teaching in the school (Attachment 7).

The current founding board has two Sussex County residents on the board. During the development of the application, Montessori Works has had four Sussex County residents serve as board members. As the application proceeds through the process for confirmation, the founding board will continue to reach out to community members with community meetings and informational sessions about the school. The goal of these meetings will be to develop a strong foundation of parents/ guardians and community members to serve on the operating board, working committees for the planning year and into the first years of operation. Specific tactics for recruiting Board and committee members from the SMS community include 1) establishing a committee of the Board that is responsible for identifying new Board and committee members, 2) assessing a prospective member's interest, 3) clearly communicating the responsibilities and expectations of members, and 4) inviting prospective members to open meetings.

Opportunities for board leadership and committee involvement will include serving on the:

- founding board and continuing to the operational board
- community financial oversight committee
- facilities committee
- marketing and fundraising committee
- human resources committee
- special project committees such as gardens, library support, and other volunteer needs for the school

2. Describe the outreach that you have conducted to engage prospective parents/guardians in the area you are proposing to serve.

Montessori Works (MW) is the organization that has fostered the community engagement that Sussex Montessori School will build on in the year ahead. The board of Montessori Works has had extensive communication with parents, business leaders and civic officials during over the past four years. Much of this has been one on one meetings with community leaders, groups, and business leaders. In July, 2017 Montessori Works engaged Sussex County resident Jim Purcell to support our community engagement efforts. In addition, Montessori Works launched a social medial campaign (described below) in the late summer of 2018 which has greatly enhanced the community awareness and support for the school. Montessori Works has had several articles both print and online in the Sussex County newspapers ([Milford Live](#); [Cape Gazette](#)).

Sussex Montessori will continue and expand to more events to specifically market the school to families throughout the next 18 months as Sussex Montessori School prepares to enroll students. Please see Educational Plan 1.3 for a description of planned recruiting activities.

Presentations and Meetings:

- Meetings with business leaders to discuss the school, educate the leaders on its benefits and ask for financial and facilities support for the school;
- Presentations at local community groups such as the County Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Clubs, Lions Clubs, First State Community Action Council, Sussex Early Childhood Council, Leadership Delaware, etc.
- Marketed the school to all day cares and kindergartens in the Georgetown-Laurel- Seaford- Bridgeville corridor;
- Meetings with Sussex County civic leaders, including state legislators and county administrators;
- Meetings with school district leaders.

Social Network Campaign:

During the summer of 2017 Montessori Works began a social networking campaign targeted to Sussex County for Sussex Montessori School. We insured that links to the Sussex Montessori School Interest Surveys were available in both English and Spanish on the [Montessori Works](#) web site. <https://montessoriworksde.org/sussex-montessori-school-2/> The Facebook page, [Citizens for Sussex Montessori school](#) launched in late October of 2017 <https://www.facebook.com/MontessoriDE/>. The site has steadily increased in activity over the 52 days it has been available with a 28-day reach of 7237.

Sampling of community leaders engaged in this conversation:

Government

- Representative Danny Short
- Senator Bryant Richardson
- Senator Ernie Lopez
- Representative Ruth Briggs King

- Representative Harvey Kenton
- Representative Dave Wilson
- Representative Pete Schwartzkopf
- Representative Lyndon Yearick
- Senator Gary Simpson
- Seaford Mayor David Genshaw
- Milford Mayor Bryan Shupe
- Milford City Manager – Eric Norenberg
- Milford Councilperson Lisa Ingram Peel
- Milford Councilperson James Burk
- Milford Councilperson Katrina Wilson
- Karen McGrath, Sussex County Regional Director, Senator Carper’s office
- David Starr, Senator Carper’s Office
- Andrew Shine, Senator Carper’s Office
- Larry Windley, Senator Carper’s Office
- I.G. Burton, Sussex County Council Representative
- Todd Lawson, Sussex County Administrator

School District/Education

- Ashley Giska, Assistant Superintendent Laurel School District
- Susan Bunting, in her role as Superintendent Indian River School District
- Dave Parrington, Superintendent Seaford School District
- Kevin Dickerson, Superintendent Milford School District
- Sara Croce, Chief Financial Office Milford School District
- Jason Peel, Director of HR and School Climate, Milford School District
- Heath Chasanov, Superintendent Woodbridge School District
- Chris Kenton, Delaware Department of Education
- Kendall Masset, Delaware Charter School Network

Community Leaders

- Thomas E. Brown, Senior Vice President Nanticoke Hospital
- Alan Levin, Advisor, SoDel Concepts
- Amy Higgins, Owner, The Guide (resort magazine) and Seaford High Graduate
- Jeff Banning, Owner of Trinity Logistics
- Bill Allan, Head Delaware Community Foundation in Georgetown
- John Hollis, Lobbyist for Nemours and founder of the Merit Program. Mr. Hollis is also involved with Boys and Girls Clubs
- Rob Liles, Insight Homes
- Bernice Edwards, Executive Director of First State Community Action
- Trish Oliphant, Head of School at Sussex Academy
- Joe Schell, Local developer and benefactor of Sussex Academy

- Amy Walls, Assistant CRA Director, Discover Bank. Discover Bank provided MW with \$20,000 in donations to provide community engagement activities
- Claudia Poretti, Former head of La Esperanza, now Vice President at Latin American Community Center
- Peggy Geisler, Sussex County Health Coalition
- Charito Mateyko, Activist, Hispanic Business Commission
- Wendy Bull, Teach for America
- Alison Rohrer, Lives in Seaford and has been a significant volunteer engaging parents and the community in this initiative
- Sally Beaumont, Board President of Primeros Passos
- Bryce Lingo, President of Lingo Realty, Lewes
- Dave Burton
- Mike Rawl, Horizon Philanthropic
- Mark Chura, Chura and Associates

Community Business

- Bay Health Medical
- Nationwide Health Services
- KSI Services
- Dentsply Corporation
- First State Manufacturing
- Beebe Hospital

Day Care and Pre-School Centers

- Beach Babies
- Kids Cottage, Lewes
- Del Tech Early Childhood Center, Georgetown
- The Breakfast Club, Milford
- TLC, Milford
- Avenue Pre-School, Milford
- Milford Boys and Girls Club

Sample Community Events:

- Hispanic Festival, Georgetown
- Boo-Que Festival, Indian River State Park
- Charter School Symposium for Southern Delaware

- 3. Describe how you will engage parents/guardians in the life of the school, in addition to any proposed governance roles described above. Describe how the school will build family-school partnerships to strengthen support for learning and encourage parental involvement. Describe any commitments or volunteer activities that the school will offer to parents.**

SMS will be focused on the whole child and that includes working with parents and the community in providing students with experiences both inside and outside the classroom. We encourage parents to engage with students in much the same way teachers engage with students, guiding them through real-life experiences which build confidence, knowledge, critical decision-making skills. In addition, the community plays a part in building a student's confidence, experience and knowledge in playing a role in society and preparing them to be good citizens.

SMS will develop an admissions process that creates opportunities for parental/guardian education about the philosophy and expectations of the Montessori method and seeks a commitment from parents to participate in their child's education. SMS will hold parent seminars to assist parents in understanding the Montessori philosophy, to apply it to their household experiences, and how to interact with their child in a similar way as the classroom teacher, (i.e. providing choices, managing expectations).

Parents and community members are encouraged to volunteer to support the school through mentoring, supporting extracurricular activity, providing facility support and clean-up, hosting new families and working with the students in outside activities. For instance, parents will be engaged to perform an annual cleanup of the building grounds and classrooms at the close of the school year. Other types of parent involvement include:

- Parents and volunteers will form volunteer committees to plan, setup and attend functions for student support, activities and fundraising.
- A parent-teacher organization will be formed to provide a forum for dialogue on matters pertaining to the culture and organization of the school.
- As required by law, a Citizens Budget Oversight Board will be formed for community members to gain insight and input into the financial management of the school and preparation of budgets to ensure the financial soundness of the school and preserve the academic integrity of the programs.

SMS is specifically targeting families from Western Sussex County where there is a larger Hispanic population. We welcome parents to share their culture, celebrations, and family history with the SMS students. SMS will need to provide for translation services to assist some families to fully participate in the school community.

Community Involvement

- 1. Describe how community members are represented on your Board and in your Founding Group?**

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.

2. Identify what community resources will be available to students and parents. Describe any partnerships that the school will have with community organizations, businesses, or other educational institutions. Specify the nature, purposes, terms, and scope of services of any such partnerships.

Sussex Montessori School anticipates building on its developing relationships with community organizations in Sussex County. No specific contracts or scopes of services have been developed at this time. This will be a focus for the School Leader and Founding Board in the summer/fall of 2018. Examples of potential partnerships include:

- The Summer Collaborative for summer programming.
- La Esperanza to support families who are in need of immigration support and family counseling services.
- First State Community Action for summer camp, after school, and family support services.
- Boys and Girls Clubs of Sussex County
- Sussex County Health Coalition

3. Describe any fee-based or in-kind commitments from community organizations or individuals that would enrich student-learning opportunities.

The Montessori Approach emphasizes the need for children to experience life outside the classroom as they do inside the classroom, with freedom to explore. The SMS will offer, but

will not require, students to participate in extracurricular activities. We intend to form alliances with outside organizations to provide opportunities for families to engage in exploratory learning. Given the rural nature of Sussex County and its access to oceans and inland bays, we will align with programs in the environmental and agricultural sciences and marine studies programs, particularly through the University of Delaware and Delaware Technical and Community College. Students will be able to participate in a multitude of summer camps and learning collaboratives, including Future Farmers of America, 4 H Clubs, Boys and Girls Clubs and Junior Achievement. We will also offer dance and drama programs, health and wellness programs such as yoga and meditation, and visual arts programs.

4. Provide, as Attachment 15, evidence of support from community partners, which may include letters of intent/commitment, memoranda of understanding, and/or contracts, and should specify the resources to be committed or contributed from the partner, as applicable.

Attachment 15 includes letters of support for various purposes:

Financial Support:

- Longwood Foundation for Sussex Montessori School (facility and school leader)
- Longwood Foundation for Montessori Works to continue to support Sussex Montessori School (fund raising and facility development)
- Welfare Foundation for Sussex Montessori School (teacher training grants and Montessori classroom materials)

Specific Intents and Commitments

- NCall Loan Fund Letter of Interest
- Lead for Delaware to support a search for school leadership and teachers.
- Horizon Philanthropic to develop a fund-raising campaign to be launched upon approval of the school. Horizon is a long standing philanthropic organization that focuses on raising money for non-profits in Sussex County. This campaign will continue to raise awareness of and garner community support for the school.
- Mark Chura of Chura and Associates to identify a facility and support the work required to repurpose a facility for the school. Chura and Associates has a strong reputation for working with non-profits in Sussex County.
- Nationwide Healthcare Services, LLC regarding a potential site for the school
- James D. Taylor, Jr to provide legal guidance

General letters of support from community leaders:

- David Genshaw, Mayor of Seaford
- Thomas E. Brown, Nanticoke Health Services
- Bryce Lingo, Lingo Realtors
- Peggy Geisler, Sussex County Health Coalition
- Tom Thunstrom, Sand Dollar Nonprofit Solutions

- Claudia Porretti, J.D., CRFE , Latin American Community Center
- Laurisa Schutt, Teach for America
- Diane Willoughby, Cadbury at Home
- Other Community Leaders