

Changing the Picture of Education in Sussex County

Envision a School that:



Montessori Works is engaging with the Sussex community to change the picture of education for students and families through the establishment of Sussex Montessori School. As a public school, Sussex Montessori School will create new choices and opportunity for Sussex County families.

Montessori education provides a unique choice for elementary students through a holistic, personalized approach to learning. Montessori students are confident, intrinsically motivated, persistent, adaptable, collaborative, responsible, creative, and academically well-prepared. The foundation Montessori education provides persists through the middle school and high school years so that students emerge ready for whatever is next in their lives: college, the workforce, community service.

Montessori learning is effective for children from all types of backgrounds and abilities. Montessori students demonstrate strengths in reading and creative writing, score higher than average in understanding mathematical concepts and in applied problem solving, and perform well on standardized tests (see the [National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector website](#)).

While Delaware is making educational progress, only a third of Delaware students are reading or doing math at grade level, and significant achievement gaps are still evident across levels of socio-economic status and English language proficiency.

“Montessori is an education for independence, preparing not just for school, but for life.”

Despite years of educational reforms, children in Sussex County have limited choices. Reducing the impact of poverty while lessening the ethnic and racial disparities in our community begins with thinking differently about what education looks like in Sussex County. Schools need to address opportunities for students from all backgrounds who want—and need—to be challenged academically and socially.

A Montessori education blends academic challenge with the teaching of practical and social-emotional skills needed to be successful in a diverse community. Sussex Montessori School will invigorate the community with child-centered education that will help shape a prosperous future for the diverse children and families in Sussex County.

Establishing a Public Montessori Presence in Sussex County

Montessori Works is a non-profit organization founded to increase accessible, authentic, quality Montessori education in Delaware. Montessori Works creates opportunities for districts and communities to start Montessori schools and programs by supporting curriculum development, planning; professional development, teacher preparation, and by advocating for policy changes needed to support Montessori in public schools.

The Montessori Works Board is a statewide group of parents, educators and

community leaders who have experienced the benefits of Montessori education and have committed themselves to increasing the opportunities for all children in Delaware. The Board is submitting an application for Sussex Montessori School as a charter school enrolling approximately 260 children aged 5-12 years old (kindergarten through grade 6). While the school will be open to any student residing in Delaware, its location in Sussex County will allow it to primarily serve students from the Sussex community.

What Differentiates Montessori Schools?

Montessori Schools have been providing education to children across the world for over 100 years. Currently, there are more than 20,000 Montessori schools worldwide. Public Montessori education is increasingly common, with 500 public schools in the United States, including district, charter, and magnet schools. The time-tested approach is based on a deep understanding of human development and how schools can support that development. Montessori classrooms are designed to stimulate the cognitive, social, and emotional development of children by preparing the classroom environment and to align to each stage from birth through adolescence, with teachers prepared to nurture children at each step of their development.

In elementary Montessori schools, children conduct independent research, explore the community around the school, and create group presentations, art exhibits, musical productions and science projects. Children receive small-group lessons tailored to their development in reading, writing and mathematics as well as to their interests. The design of activities maximizes the time that students are engaged, and children enjoy their work and study.

Meeting and working with a diverse community

Our children are growing up in a socially and culturally diverse community. In 1990, 74% of the student population was white, compared to 47% by 2015, and the percentage of Hispanic students grew during that time from 3% to 14%.

Recognizing and appreciating this diversity is key to a successful education. Grounded in a global vision, Montessori schools embrace diversity and the gifts that each family's traditions and culture add to the school community.

Montessori schools also value the diversity that each child's interest and affinities bring to the classroom community. Montessori classrooms personalize learning, allowing children to develop their gifts and to work on their challenges.

Sussex Montessori School seeks to make diversity a strength, and to develop a school that will present a true cross-section of our vibrant and growing Sussex community.



Essential elements of Montessori practice

Choice — Children in Montessori classrooms have freedom within limits, meaning that they have as much choice as they can handle responsibly. Montessori teachers and students develop workplans and expectations about what needs to be completed in the course of a day or week. Students develop plans for how to accomplish their goals. The result is students who are motivated and engaged in their work and who develop skills in time management.

Classroom Materials — Montessori teachers understand that learning happens when students engage all of their senses. The specially-designed concrete, self-correcting materials support engagement, curiosity, independence, and self-guided learning. The prepared environments in Montessori schools include shelving at eye-level that enables students to see all the materials and activities that are available to them.

Multi-age classrooms — Children stay in the same classroom for multiple years,

which allows younger children to learn from older classmates and older children to firm up their knowledge by guiding practicing with younger ones. This structure provides children with consistency in peer groups and teachers, and it allows teachers to engage students in different ways.

Uninterrupted work periods — Montessori schools offer uninterrupted periods for independent work, allowing children to focus, build attention, concentrate, and learn to persevere through challenges.

Supporting children with learning challenges as well as those who are gifted — Montessori teachers are focused on the individual needs of children, so when needed, the materials and lessons are adapted for children who experience learning challenges. At the same time, for children who thrive on additional challenges, there is no ceiling to learning. In Montessori communities, everyone learns from one another and everyone contributes. Each child finds his or her own place in the classroom without feeling labeled.

Montessori teachers are highly-qualified experts in pedagogy and child development. Typically, teachers have teaching degrees and certification from the state, as well as specialized training/certification in the Montessori method, which prepares them to present a comprehensive curriculum individualized for each child.

Montessori classrooms are beautiful, inviting, and peaceful — The carefully-prepared classroom has a sense of order. Montessori classrooms are clutter free, removing distractions for children. Children are taught grace and courtesy, learning to take turns, listen to others, and fix problems. Cooperation, empathy, and self-control are carefully taught as a requirement for children to work collaboratively and independently in the classroom.

Engaged families and community — Montessori schools engage the community and family to enhance the learning experience of the children. Community and family members bring rich resources to the learning experiences of students. It is common to find family members sharing their cultural heritage with students, community members sharing their work and life experiences, and students engaged in community projects outside of the school.

Who are our partners and funders?

Montessori Works, Inc. has received initial planning support from the Longwood Foundation, the Welfare Foundation, and Discover Bank. We expect continued support from our current funders to complete the charter application process and support the capital needs of the school. Moreover, the Sussex Montessori School Board will identify new and local funding to help the school continue to thrive.

What's Next?

- Montessori Works is providing opportunities for the Sussex community to learn more about Montessori education and why it is an important option for the community. Watch for dates and times in local newspapers and on our website for information
- We are identifying potential locations for Sussex Montessori School so that it can best serve the diverse population of Sussex County
- We are finalizing the Charter application to submit to the Delaware Department of Education
- We need your help: we are seeking committee and board members for Sussex Montessori School to work with us as we develop the school



Email Montessori Works Board Chair, Linda Zankowsky
at lindaz@montessoriworksde.org

