

In The Matter Of:
Delaware Department of Education
In re: Sussex Montessori School

Public Hearing
February 12, 2018

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STATE OF DELAWARE
DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

IN RE: SUSSEX MONTESSORI :
SCHOOL :

Public hearing taken pursuant
to notice at the Georgetown Public Library,
123 West Pine Street, Georgetown, Delaware,
beginning at 6:00 p.m., on Monday, February
12, 2018, before Gloria M. D'Amore,
Registered Professional Reporter and Notary
Public.

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APPEARANCES:

On behalf of the State of Delaware
Delaware Department of Education:
DENISE STOUFFER,
LEAD EDUCATION ASSOCIATE

On behalf of the State of Delaware
State Board of Education:
NINA LOU BUNTING

On behalf of the State of Delaware
Delaware Department of Justice:
CATHERINE T. HICKEY, ESQUIRE
Attorney for State of Delaware
Department of Education

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1 MS. STOUFFER: Good evening. I
2 declare this public hearing to be open.

3 My name is Denise Stouffer. I
4 am the Lead Education Associate, and I have
5 been appointed by the Secretary of Education
6 to conduct this public hearing.

7 At this time, I will ask the
8 other people at the table to introduce
9 themselves for the record.

10 MS. HICKEY: Good evening. My
11 name is Catherine Hickey. I am a Deputy
12 Attorney General with the Delaware Department
13 of Justice. I am Counsel to The Hearing
14 Committee tonight.

15 MS. BUNTING: Good evening.
16 I'm Nina Lou Bunting. I'm the Vice-president
17 of the State Board of Education.

18 MS. STOUFFER: The Sussex
19 Montessori Charter School has filed an
20 application for a new charter.

21 As is required by law, the
22 matter was referred to the Charter School
23 Accountability Committee for investigation
24 and report.



1 This joint public hearing is
2 being held by the Department of Education and
3 the State Board of Education to receive
4 public comments on the application.

5 I would like the record to
6 reflect that the notice of the time, date and
7 place of today's public hearing was published
8 in The News Journal and The Delaware State
9 News on January 23, 2018.

10 In addition, notice was posted
11 at the Charter School Accountability
12 Committee's official place of business on the
13 Delaware Department of Education's official
14 website and on the State Public Meeting
15 Calendar on the State's official website on
16 January 9, 2018.

17 Further, the applicant was
18 personally notified of the time, date and
19 place of today's public hearing on
20 January 11, 2018.

21 A court reporter is present so
22 that a record of this hearing can be made.
23 It will be necessary for each speaker to
24 clearly identify his or herself before



1 beginning to speak so that the court reporter
2 will be able to note who you are.

3 The record of this hearing will
4 be provided to the Secretary of Education and
5 Members of the State Board of Education
6 together with any written or electronic
7 comments received during the course of the
8 new application process.

9 To date, we have received
10 several comments for the school on this
11 application.

12 We will proceed in the
13 following manner.

14 First, we will hear from any
15 representatives of the Charter School who
16 wish to comment on the new application.

17 Then we will take comments from
18 anyone else who desires to speak.

19 I've collected the sign-up
20 sheets that were at the front of the room.

21 Could I also have a show of
22 hands of everyone who has a desire to make
23 any comments this evening so I can determine
24 whether it may be necessary to impose a time



1 limit on comments.

2 We'll go off the record.

3 (Off the record.)

4 MS. STOUFFER: Back on the
5 record.

6 (Back on the record.)

7 MS. STOUFFER: I reserve the
8 right to limit comments if it is purely
9 repetitive or cumulative.

10 At this point in time, I will
11 accept comments from any representatives of
12 the school.

13 MS. LINDA ZANKOWSKY: Good
14 evening. I am Linda Zankowsky. I am Chair
15 of the Board for Montessori Works and for
16 Sussex Montessori School.

17 Thank you for this opportunity
18 for us to share our passion for Sussex
19 Montessori School with you.

20 Many of our Board Members have
21 experienced Montessori Schools as parents or
22 as educators.

23 Typically, Montessori Schools
24 in Delaware have only been available in New



1 Castle County, and up until recently only in
2 the private sector.

3 After watching our own and many
4 others children thrive in Montessori Schools,
5 we set about working to bring public
6 Montessori education to children and families
7 throughout Delaware.

8 Since 2014, we have been
9 spending time in Sussex County talking with
10 individuals and being present at community
11 events.

12 While some knew of Montessori
13 Schools others had less knowledge. But when
14 Montessori Works conducted an interest study,
15 parents responded enthusiastically to
16 individual features of Montessori education,
17 including personalized learning, the
18 opportunity to learn from peers, the
19 development of real life skills, the support
20 of innovative thinking, the value of global
21 citizenship and the focus on the whole child.

22 Montessori Schools are the only
23 place in my 30-plus years as an educational
24 leader where I consistently see a careful and



1 thoughtful focus on all of the elements that
2 lead to these outcomes that Sussex County
3 parents shared. A carefully aligned
4 curriculum. Communities of learners.
5 Meticulously designed classroom environment.
6 A cohesive philosophy across the school
7 community rooted in the idea that children
8 are capable and should be respected.
9 Carefully prepared teachers who form an adult
10 community of learners focused on the needs of
11 the children. And perhaps, most importantly,
12 an emphasis on learning joyful and a
13 life-enhancing experience.

14 Last, we know from the
15 research, most recently an extensive study in
16 South Carolina, that Montessori Schools
17 positively impact the academic, social and
18 emotional learning of all children regardless
19 of economic and cultural background.

20 And as a part of our
21 application process, we have collected 360
22 interest forms to date representing
23 approximately 400 children, numerous families
24 interested in volunteering, teachers



1 interested in teaching in the school and
2 others who do not have children but feel that
3 this is an important option for Sussex
4 County.

5 This growing momentum has
6 reinforced for the Board of Sussex Montessori
7 School that this is good work, this is
8 important work, and we are ready and prepared
9 to collaborate with the community to bring
10 Sussex Montessori School to them.

11 Thank you for this opportunity.

12 MS. STOUFFER: Thank you.

13 MS. JESSICA CRAMPTON-BRADLEY:

14 My name is Jessica Crampton-Bradley.

15 Thank you for the opportunity
16 to share my wholehearted support for the
17 addition of a Sussex Montessori School to our
18 area.

19 I am a Sussex County native,
20 and I have multi-generations of family
21 members throughout Sussex. So this area is
22 my home.

23 I am a recent member of the
24 Montessori Works Board with a focus on the



1 Sussex County project.

2 One of the most important
3 reasons that I am so passionate about
4 creating this opportunity is sitting in the
5 audience this evening, my granddaughter,
6 Harper Lynn. There she is. She represents
7 the future, and all of us have a vested
8 interest in shaping the best people to lead
9 us into that future.

10 Sussex County needs strong and
11 innovative young people to stay here to make
12 this area grow and thrive for their children
13 and their children and so on.

14 As I contemplated how I feel
15 about Montessori choice here in Sussex,
16 several key factors come to mind.

17 First, the learning environment
18 should be fun and meet each student where
19 they are. The classrooms and associated
20 materials therein with Montessori method
21 simply draw you in and you have no choice but
22 to engage whether you understand what is
23 behind it or not. It's fun. Montessori
24 method teaches in the way that children learn



1 and that is exciting to me.

2 Perhaps, even more important
3 for me is the word collaborate as it relates
4 to the teaching method. I live and work in
5 the real world today. And the thought of
6 creating collaborative, innovative young
7 people with a global perspective is very
8 appealing to me. Multi-age classrooms where
9 it's okay to ask for help and in turn to help
10 a fellow student that can benefit from your
11 skills reinforces the ideals that I wish to
12 see in the world.

13 When I observe a group of
14 people sitting together, but looking only at
15 their phones, and not communicating verbally
16 or otherwise, it concerns me that we may be
17 losing our ability to converse, disagree and
18 strive to better understand the other
19 person's point of view. To me, an open and
20 collaborative environment is certainly
21 conducive to better communications and
22 empathy among our younger population. And
23 starting early is the key.

24 This Charter School undertaking



1 is not for the faint of heart. But I have
2 seen enthusiasm from parents and children,
3 community organizations and fellow Sussex
4 Countians from all corners of the County.
5 There are many challenges that lie ahead for
6 us in determining the best way to make
7 Montessori accessible to those who want it.
8 But we have initiated a wave of enthusiasm
9 that will build and grow as we move forward
10 with engaged members of our community,
11 churches and other organizations.

12 I know that we can do this, and
13 I commit to make it happen.

14 Thank you.

15 MR. SEAN STEWARD: Good
16 evening. My name is Sean Steward. I am a
17 Board Member of Montessori Works.

18 I'm here today just to share my
19 passion about bringing a Charter School to
20 Sussex County.

21 As a father of three, I know
22 how kids can be different. Out of the three
23 kids that I've had, one is in public school
24 -- well, all three are in public school. One



1 has been accepted to the Charter School here
2 in Georgetown. And it was great to have that
3 option there for him. I think that every
4 family should have the opportunity to do what
5 is best for their child.

6 And I think that every child
7 should have the opportunity to be in a
8 setting that allows them to be able to
9 explore, to be able to grow, to be able to
10 learn, to be able to lead, to be able to
11 follow, to be able to encourage the other
12 classmates.

13 I think that in the elementary
14 realm, there is not an option that is
15 available for parents in Sussex County. And
16 I think that the Montessori method is one
17 that is proven. It has been here for over a
18 hundred years. And it meets the family and
19 the children where they are and provides a
20 great platform for them to be model citizens,
21 people who will contribute not only in their
22 communities, but wherever they go. I think
23 they will be a beacon for what Sussex County
24 has to offer and the best in its place.



1 So I just want to wish my
2 support for Sussex County Montessori School.

3 Thank you.

4 MS. TRISH HERMANCE: I'm here
5 to voice my support for Sussex Montessori
6 School, obviously, as a Member Board, but
7 also as a 25-plus year educator.

8 I've worked in regular public
9 school district schools. I've worked in a
10 Charter School as a teacher and as a school
11 leader. And I see the benefit of having
12 something unique, having an opportunity for
13 parents and for teachers to choose something
14 different than what they might otherwise have
15 in the regular public school districts.

16 And I also want to use this
17 opportunity as sort of a call for action
18 because this is not going to happen unless we
19 have the support of everyone in the community
20 from the State Board of Education, to the
21 Secretary of Education, to everyone in the
22 Department, and then, most importantly, to
23 all of those people, right, and all of the
24 folks that live in Sussex County.



1 A Charter School can get
2 started with the work of a smaller group, but
3 it will sustain itself and grow to its best
4 potential with the engagement of entire
5 community.

6 So I am hoping that this
7 process is bringing more and more light to
8 the work that we are doing and hoping that
9 will then bring more people to the project
10 and help us to see it through until we open
11 the doors in 2019.

12 So, again, I will just close
13 with my support for the school and bring this
14 option to Sussex County.

15 Thank you.

16 MS. STOUFFER: Off the record.

17 (Off the record.)

18 MS. STOUFFER: Back on the
19 record.

20 At this point I will accept
21 comments from anyone else who desires to
22 speak.

23 Please remember to identify
24 yourselves before you begin your comments.



1 MR. PURCELL: Good evening. My
2 name is James Purcell. I am a life-long
3 resident of Sussex County. I live in
4 Milford. And I also have about 20 years
5 experience working in the nonprofit sector
6 and also as an educator.

7 I've had the extreme pleasure
8 of working with the Board Members here in
9 Sussex County to do some outreach and support
10 of the Sussex Montessori School. I think it
11 represents a great opportunity for education
12 in Sussex County.

13 When you talk about choice and
14 the opportunity that this brings and the
15 different method of teaching, it's so much
16 different than everybody else knows. And it
17 has only been available in the private
18 sector. So we are able to now bring this to
19 the public sector and really give the whole
20 community an opportunity. And what we are
21 looking for is a real diverse community in
22 this school. And we all know that Sussex
23 County is quite diverse, and it has changed
24 over the last 20 or 30 years.



1 So I think this school is
2 responding to that change. Responding to the
3 way that kids learn differently. Kids come
4 from different cultures. Kids come from
5 different family background and things of
6 that nature. So I think it represents a
7 great opportunity educationally.

8 But I also wanted to point out,
9 too, as Delaware grows and Sussex County
10 grows in leaps and bounds, as we see all of
11 the wonderful businesses that are coming to
12 the area and the infrastructure that's being
13 built in the area and the brand new hospital
14 that's going to be up in the Milford area,
15 it's going to be attracting a lot of
16 professionals to come here. And those
17 professionals are going to be looking for
18 opportunities. Opportunities for lifestyle,
19 a place to live, a place to have their kids
20 educated.

21 So I think this will not only
22 be a great educational draw opportunity, it
23 will be truly a social and economic driving
24 force for the County because the school will



1 be able to represent itself as an option for
2 those employers that will be coming into the
3 County in the years to come.

4 Once again, I want to voice my
5 pleasure in support of this application and
6 look forward to seeing it become a reality.

7 Thank you.

8 MR. DUSTIN YODER: My name is
9 Dustin Yoder. I'm here with my wife. We
10 have three kids. The oldest one is five.
11 We're from the Woodbridge School District.
12 So he is in kindergarten there.

13 We've been very happy with the
14 teachers he has had with their passion and
15 care for the students. We feel really good
16 about that.

17 As I looked around the school
18 and started to see certain things, maybe that
19 concerned me a little bit, I started reading
20 and doing some research and trying to learn
21 about education. And after I say that, I
22 realize that I'm talking to people who have
23 made it their life's work to manage education
24 and to be educators. I've been studying this



1 for about four weeks. So I am probably a
2 little bit behind.

3 But the things that I read and
4 that I observe sort of all lead me to the
5 same conclusion, that maybe the system that
6 we have is sort of taking some of the fun,
7 some of the passion away from the student as
8 they go through school.

9 And as we looked around, we
10 visited the International Montessori School
11 down in Lewes. So we sort of came onto
12 Montessori that way and through reading some
13 things. And I see it as something that I'm
14 very excited to possibly have the opportunity
15 to send my children to.

16 I see it as something that is
17 going to allow them to have fun in school,
18 allow them to pursue things that they are
19 passionate about, help them to find out what
20 that is, and also, like we already heard,
21 teach them to collaborate with their peers.

22 One of the biggest take away
23 that I want my children to have as they come
24 out of their schooling experience is to



1 really have a love of learning, to be a whole
2 person, a well-rounded person. I think if
3 they have that love of learning and they
4 develop that intrinsic motivation, they'll be
5 a lot better off in life than if they've come
6 through school and they constantly had to
7 have been motivated by the outside forces.
8 Do this because we're telling you to, do this
9 because you need to know it for later, that
10 sort of thing.

11 In my mind, I just can't see
12 that that's going to lead them to really have
13 that love of learning.

14 I also see Montessori as a way
15 for them to develop perseverance and to
16 develop their ability to manage their
17 emotions, to realize that they can solve
18 problems, that this can get through things
19 without having to lean on something else.

20 It's personal to my wife and I.
21 Our oldest two were adopted out of foster
22 care. And our son was born addicted to
23 opiates. So at the ripe age of five months
24 when he came to us, he had already been



1 through addiction and withdrawal.

2 So when I think about school, I
3 don't even so much care about the
4 qualifications that he comes out. I don't
5 care if he goes to college. I want him to
6 have a good life and have a happy life. And
7 with that in his background, like I said
8 before, it is really important to me that he
9 learns how to manage himself, manage his
10 emotions and have a love of life, a love of
11 learning and to become that whole person that
12 we've talked about.

13 I would love to have this
14 option available in our community. I think
15 it could benefit certainly my family. I am
16 talking selfishly. But also, I think it
17 really has a potential to do greater good in
18 the community.

19 That's all I have. Thank you.

20 MS. STOUFFER: Is there anyone
21 else who would like to make a comment this
22 evening?

23 MR. MIKE RAWL: My name is Mike
24 Rawl.



1 So I didn't know a lot about
2 Montessori until my grandson went to a
3 Montessori School in Baltimore. My grandson
4 is a great kid. He has been very coddled by
5 his mother. And I was concerned that
6 Montessori was too loose a regimen for him.
7 And that their plans were for him to go on to
8 a Jesuit school and he wouldn't be prepared
9 for the rigors of Jesuit education.

10 So when I was up in Baltimore,
11 I went to visit him in his classroom. And he
12 was petting the animals and doing this and
13 doing that. And it was a beautiful campus.
14 And he was a happy kid and self assured. And
15 he left Montessori. And I was kind of like,
16 Oh, my God, what is going to happen now. And
17 now he is a straight A student at Loyola. He
18 is a straight A in Latin, chemistry classes.
19 He stays up late and works his butt off.

20 And the only thing I can
21 attribute it to, besides my remarkable genes,
22 is that he got such self confidence from
23 being in the Montessori classroom. He just
24 has confidence. He's not real athletic. But



1 he tried out for the soccer team and made it.
2 Now he's very self assured. He's going to
3 play baseball this year.

4 So I really attribute almost
5 all of that to his Montessori background.
6 He's an only child. So I was really pleased
7 to hear that Montessori is here and people
8 are here to help you guys put it together.

9 MS. STOUFFER: Is there anyone
10 else who desires to speak?

11 I want to thank all of you for
12 participating today.

13 The Secretary will consider
14 your comments in making her decision at the
15 conclusion of the new application process.

16 The hearing is now closed.
17 Thank you.

18 (The Public Hearing was
19 concluded at, approximately, 6:26 p.m.)
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1 State of Delaware:

2 New Castle County:

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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

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6

I, Gloria M. D'Amore, Registered

7

Professional Reporter and Notary Public, do

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hereby certify that the foregoing record,

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Pages 1 to 24 inclusive, is a true and

10

accurate transcript of my stenographic notes

11

taken on Monday, February 12, 2018, in the

12

above-captioned matter.

13

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set

14

my hand and seal this 15th day of February,

15

2018, at Wilmington, Delaware.

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GLORIA M. D'AMORE, RPR

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24



A	<p>age (1) 20:23</p> <p>ahead (1) 12:5</p> <p>aligned (1) 8:3</p> <p>allow (2) 19:17,18</p> <p>allows (1) 13:8</p> <p>almost (1) 23:4</p> <p>already (2) 19:20 20:24</p> <p>also (9) 5:21 14:7,16 16:4,6 17:8 19:20 20:14 21:16</p> <p>among (1) 11:22</p> <p>animals (1) 22:12</p> <p>anyone (4) 5:18 15:21 21:20 23:9</p> <p>appealing (1) 11:8</p> <p>applicant (1) 4:17</p> <p>application (8) 3:20 4:4 5:8,11,16 8:21 18:5 23:15</p> <p>appointed (1) 3:5</p> <p>approximately (2) 8:23 23:19</p> <p>area (6) 9:18,21 10:12 17:12,13,14</p> <p>around (2)</p>	<p>18:17 19:9</p> <p>Associate (1) 3:4</p> <p>associated (1) 10:19</p> <p>assured (2) 22:14 23:2</p> <p>athletic (1) 22:24</p> <p>Attorney (1) 3:12</p> <p>attracting (1) 17:15</p> <p>attribute (2) 22:21 23:4</p> <p>audience (1) 10:5</p> <p>available (4) 6:24 13:15 16:17 21:14</p> <p>away (2) 19:7,22</p>	<p>4:24 15:24 21:8</p> <p>begin (1) 15:24</p> <p>beginning (1) 5:1</p> <p>behind (2) 10:23 19:2</p> <p>being (4) 4:2 7:10 17:12 22:23</p> <p>benefit (3) 11:10 14:11 21:15</p> <p>besides (1) 22:21</p> <p>best (5) 10:8 12:6 13:5,24 15:3</p> <p>better (3) 11:18,21 20:5</p> <p>biggest (1) 19:22</p> <p>bit (2) 18:19 19:2</p> <p>Board (11) 3:17 4:3 5:5 6:15, 20 9:6,24 12:17 14:6, 20 16:8</p> <p>born (1) 20:22</p> <p>bounds (1) 17:10</p> <p>brand (1) 17:13</p> <p>bring (5) 7:5 9:9 15:9,13 16:18</p> <p>bringing (2) 12:19 15:7</p> <p>brings (1) 16:14</p>
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