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 …**
   SMS will not deliberately target to serve any particular kind of disability, but will be open to serving any student who has been identified through the special education process. 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).

   b. **Describe how the school will implement Response to Intervention procedures, including a plan for how data will be collected, …**

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 (outlined in Section 2B below). 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, 2014) to conduct a routine 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
- AIMS Web Math Assessments
- AIMS Web Literacy Assessments
- Curriculum Based Measurement in Reading
- Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement
- Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)

For children that are known to be at risk, Sussex Montessori teachers will administer both the DIBELS Reading Assessments and AIMS web Math Assessment early in 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 having special education needs will be reviewed in September with a response-to-intervention plan to follow. The DIBELS Reading assessments and AIMS Web Math Assessments will be administered to children 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.

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). The DIBELS Reading assessments and AIMS web Math Assessments will be administered to **all** children 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 based on the structure of the three-tiered approach for RTI. 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 combined 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.

c. Describe how the school will organize and use instructional support teams …

Throughout the response to interventions process, teachers will be supported by the Instructional Support Team (IST). 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, child's parents, 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.

2. Students with Disabilities

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 …**

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. 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.

The 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.

b. Describe the multi-tiers of evidenced-based academic and behavioral interventions…
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 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, 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 how the school will provide a continuum of educational placements for students with disabilities…
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?

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 special school
    b. at home
    c. a hospital or other institution
    d. another clearly defined educational setting

Also, as documented in special education regulatory statutes, SMS anticipates meeting its obligation of appropriate placement of specialized education children 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.

b. Describe how the school will ensure that students with disabilities have access …

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. 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.

   c. **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. 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 are 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.

Other 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. 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

d. **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.

If the parent is not able to attend the IEP meeting every attempt will be made to accommodate the parent's schedule. If the parent cannot attend in person and agrees in writing, the IEP may be held via conference call. 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.

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

All IEPs will include any accommodations required for a student to participate in DeSSA. 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:

- Extending time to complete the assessment

- Testing in a separate area
- Small group testing
- Individual testing
- Use of Braille or oral reading for sight impaired child
- Use of calculators
- Print Size enlarged
- Text to Speech Support

f. **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 quarterly or more if deemed necessary reviews of individual student's IEPs and the student's progress towards 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.

g. **For students with disabilities who are age 14 or older….**
   N/A

C. **Monitoring and Accountability**
   a. **Describe how the school will regularly evaluate and monitor the progress and success of students with disabilities …**

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. Decisions regarding revisions to the IEP will require that SMS teachers and specialist maintain specific steps to track and document student progress towards goals established in the IEP. The IEP team will identify ways that the classroom teacher and specialists might document and collect evidence of progress toward student goals. It is the responsibility of each educator responsible for the student's success to monitor the student's progress against the goals and to maintain documentation of their progress. 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 behaviors, classroom products, formative assessments, 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. If it is determined that the instructional strategies outline in the IEP are not making an impact, the IEP team will convene to review the goals and strategies to meet those goals outlining new goals if needed.

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. When at all possible, flexibility in scheduling will be done to accommodate parent's work schedules. Assistant teachers will cover classrooms when lead teachers are required in an IEP meeting that conflicts with the classroom schedule. This provides more flexibility to accommodate parent schedules. If an excusal is needed for any reason, SMS will follow the excusal guidelines as outlined by the DDOE.

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 …

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….

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. This is easily accommodated since classrooms will have a lead teacher and assistant teacher who can cover the class while the lead teacher attends the IEP meeting if needed.

e. Describe the school's system of accountability to ensure compliance with IDEA…

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.

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3.   English Language Learners

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 the 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…

Because SMS 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 …**

Since SMS 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 …**

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 …**

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 …

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 …

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, …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.**

SMS 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.**
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.**
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