

Staffing Plans, Management, and Evaluation [14 Del. C. § 512(6)]

1. Explain the relationship that will exist between the proposed charter school and its employees ...

All administrators, teachers, assistant teachers, administrative assistants, paraprofessionals, custodial and maintenance employees and drivers will be state employees, subject to all employee rules and regulations, and will be receive opportunities for benefit and retirement packages as such. Upon hire, all employees will sign an employment agreement. The purpose of the agreement is to outline the employee/employer relationship, identify the compensation and benefits offered to the employee, and detail the duties to be performed by the employee. New employee orientation will include an explanation of the school’s core values, vision, and mission. In addition, each new employee will be given an overview of the benefits program and will complete all necessary paperwork prior to employment.

All employment at SMS will be “at will.” This means that both employees and the school have the right to terminate employment at any time, with or without advance notice (though all parties may request and should try to give thirty days’ notice); and, with or without cause. However, SMS will not discharge employees for exercising their right to vote or their political affiliation; for answering the call for military service or jury duty; for exercising their right of association; for filing a worker’s compensation claim; or for receiving an order for wage garnishment.

2. Outline the proposed school’s salary ranges and employment benefits ...

For an outline of proposed salary ranges and employment benefits for SMS staff, see Attachment 14-C. Salaries for the school leader are based on comparable salaries for these positions at other Delaware charter schools. Teaching staff, counselor and nurse salaries are calculated at the average salaries for DE charter schools as outlined in Attachment 14-C.

Montessori Schools are highly sought after by high-performing educators because they find that they can teach in a child-centered approach resulting in calm and peaceful learning environments. The school will naturally retain high-performing teachers who seek a rewarding environment in which to teach.

3. Describe the plan and timeline for recruiting and selecting the teaching staff and other educators/professional staff...

The School Leader and Montessori Works Incorporated will work together in recruiting and hiring the teachers and school support staff; as well as defining responsibilities, determining compensation for all school employees within the constraints of the school budget, and fulfilling the instructional design. The school leader, with approval from the Board, will have the final authority to hire teachers and other instructional staff.

Montessori Works Incorporated will aid the school’s recruitment efforts by working to recruit teachers already trained in the Montessori method pedagogy. Specifically, Montessori Works will conduct an aggressive recruitment campaign through local and national advertising for all

open positions. Interested candidates will be screened and participate in a rigorous interview process based on national criteria around recruitment and selection. The process for hiring the school leader, teachers, and other school staff will include:

- recruitment and screening; review of credentials, background, experience, and references;
- sample lesson (if applicable); writing sample; interviews with the school leader and/or Board;
- sample lessons; and recommendations and contract approvals by the Board. The tasks and timeline for hiring may be found in Attachment 15 under the Start Up Plan.

In addition, Montessori Works Incorporated is establishing a teacher certification pipeline for teachers interested in gaining a certificate in Montessori pedagogy. Currently, Montessori Works is working to develop a partnership with a local University. It is envisioned that a consortium of charters and local districts will join together to send teachers who have been hired to work in a Montessori School to the program. The program will be initially provided by the NCMPS who will deliver the program in the first years while training future local leaders to develop a locally sustainable program. This program is designed specifically to support teachers in public Montessori Schools including additional courses in literacy, family relationships, and children of poverty. The program includes face to face course work, online course work, and in school coaching. The program will seek Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (MACTE) accreditation. MACTE is recognized as one of the two nationally recognized accrediting agencies for teacher preparation.

If non-certified state teachers are hired on emergency certification, it will be necessary for them to successfully pass the PRAXIS I and II and to possess a nationally accredited degree in their core area of instruction. Alternatively, uncertified teachers may participate in a Delaware-approved alternative route to certification program to earn their teaching certificate. SMS will not exceed the state maximum for uncertified teachers. All teachers will be required to maintain compliance with state and Federal certification guidelines.

Once the school is established, the use of assistants in each classroom will provide a possible opportunity to develop future teachers.

4. Outline the school’s procedures for hiring and dismissing school personnel, including the school’s process for conducting criminal background checks.

The process for hiring the school leader, teachers, and other school staff will include

- recruitment and screening;
- review of credentials, background, experience, and references;
- sample lesson (if applicable);
- writing sample;
- interviews with the school leader and/or Board;
- sample lessons;
- and recommendations and contract approvals by the Board.

The tasks and timeline for hiring may be found in Appendix D-1. As part of the pre-employment process, all employees and Board members will be required to complete a criminal background check (CBC) through the Delaware State Police. In cases where termination is necessary to ensure a safe and/or productive learning environment for the students, the following will guide the termination process:

- The school leader, in consultation with the Operating Board chair, will make the recommendation to the Board for termination of an employee.
- The employee may appeal this decision to the Board by initially informing the Board Chair of the intent to appeal in writing.
- The employee will meet with the Board and the school leader.
- A final decision will be rendered by the Board.
- Employees may also be dismissed through the DPAS II process explained in #5 below.

The complete procedures for hiring and dismissal may be found in the Employee Handbook which is included as Appendix D-2.

5. Describe how the School Leadership Team will use the Delaware Performance Appraisal System (DPAS)....

SMS's school leader will complete the online DPAS II Evaluator Training, accessible via the Professional Development Management System (PDMS) during the school's planning year, as required for all new administrators in Delaware public schools. The school leader will also attend the recommended three-day, in-person DPAS II Training for New Administrators, offered in the fall of the planning year. SMS teachers who need to will complete the online DPAS II Teacher Training or DPAS II Specialist Training blackboard course available through PDMS prior to their first evaluations.

The school leader will ensure that all observations and related materials are entered into the Evaluation Reporting System (ERS) as required by the State. To ensure fidelity to the DPAS II evaluation system the Board and CMO will monitor the progress of the school leader toward teacher evaluation timelines. The Board and/or CMO will request feedback from the state to ensure that reports are accurate and complete. Periodically, the Board will request that external "experts" in the DPAS II evaluation system to review or audit the evaluation reports and provide feedback on their accuracy and thoroughness.

The DPAS II process will provide the backbone for feedback on teacher practice and related responsibilities in the building. Teachers who have summative ratings of 'Effective' or 'Highly Effective' may be considered for advancements, promotions, and extra responsibilities within the building. Teachers who have summative ratings of 'Needs Improvement' or 'Ineffective' will be provided with written expectations and/or improvement plans targeted at enhancing their performance. Ultimately, teachers who do not improve and continue to exhibit patterns of ineffective teaching may be subject to dismissal.

Employees with unacceptable job performance will be notified of the need for improved

performance in written and verbal communication, and will be provided with any needed professional development and support to make improvements. In the most extreme cases (e.g., employee actions or words that harm or threaten to endanger students' well-being and behavior that creates an irrevocable breach of trust), employees may be terminated immediately.

Should a teaching vacancy arise in the middle of the year, it will be filled using Montessori Works recruitment and selection support.

6. Explain how and when the Board will evaluate the Principal/School Leader...

The Executive Board will work with the Board President to evaluate the school leader. There will be an annual review using the DPAS II for Principals. The Board Chair will attend the state DPAS II training for evaluators of administrators. Goals will be established and monitored annually. Particular attention will be given to the mission specific goal of providing a Montessori education at SMS and how the school leader supports that goal. The NCMPS rubric of Essential Elements will be used as a part of this evaluation. Because the principal is ultimately responsible for student learning in the school, the evaluation will also include a review of the DeSSA scores and student progress.

If the school leader does not meet performance expectations, he or she will be notified of the need for improved performance in written and verbal communication by the Board President. The Board President will meet with the school leader to create an improvement plan, and to develop a coaching schedule with a leadership coach for the school. If the improvement in leadership capacity is not realized within the developed timeframe, the Board President, with consultation of the Board, will make the decision to terminate the school leader. Employment decisions related to the school leader are at the sole discretion of the Board. In the most extreme cases described above, where students may be put in harm's way by the continuation of the school leader's employment; he or she will be terminated immediately.

In the event that the school leader is terminated, the most senior academic lead will take over the duties of the school leader, until such time as the Board President and Personnel Committee to begin recruit, interview and replace the school leader.

7. What mechanisms or options will the Board leverage to address unsatisfactory leadership performance, ...

While academic scores will not be a criterion for discipline or termination of the school leader, under performance of the school year over year may necessitate a constructive re-evaluation of the school leader's ability to guide the school and a corrective plan should be scheduled for the subsequent academic year. If improvement does not occur, the Board will consider termination based on the evaluation.

A mismanagement of school resources resulting in jeopardizing the school's finances and operational metrics will result in a hearing and immediate dismissal if appropriate.