

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION APPLICATION TO MODIFY AN APPROVED CHARTER

Major Charter Modification Request Sussex Academy



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CHARTER SCHOOL MODIFICATION APPLICATION QUESTIONS

There are core questions that must be answered by the applicant, regardless of whether the modification is considered a minor or major modification. Additional questions are determined by the specific nature of the request, for example expansion or reduction by more than 15%, change of name, change of location, etc. Please provide clear, complete, and accurate information in response to each question.

Please indicate the type(s) of modification(s) you are requesting by checking all applicable boxes below:

Table 2

Minor Modification (Section A Only)		Major Modification (Section A <u>AND</u> additional questions identified below)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Enrollment change (increase or decrease) between 5 and 15%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Performance Agreement Section A only
<input type="checkbox"/>	Change agreement with EMO/CMO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Enrollment change (increase or decrease) of greater than 15% Section B
<input type="checkbox"/>	Start date (one-time) delay	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Grade configuration (adding grade levels or reducing grade levels) Section C
<input type="checkbox"/>	Name of charter school		Educational Program (i.e. curriculum) Section D
<input type="checkbox"/>	Existing or planned school facilities or structures (including any plan to use temporary or modular structures)		Mission (includes At-Risk designation) Section E
<input type="checkbox"/>	Change in terms to current site facility arrangement (i.e. lease to purchase)		Replace, remove, or add EMO/CMO, or transfer of authorizer Section F
<input type="checkbox"/>	Educator Evaluation Process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Enrollment preferences Section G
<input type="checkbox"/>	A change to the current authorized number of hours, either daily or annually, devoted to actual school sessions.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Location change Section H
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other		Goals for student performance Section I

Section A Core Questions:

1. What modification does the school's Board of Directors want to make to the term(s) of the charter? Identify the page number(s) on which the term(s) is/are stated in the currently approved charter. If the term(s) of the charter the school wants to modify is/are conditions placed on the charter by the Secretary of Education and members of the State Board of Education, state the condition(s) and the date(s) on which the condition(s) was/were placed on the school's charter.

A copy of the last two Sussex Academy Charter Renewal Applications has been provided as appendices:

Appendix A - 2017 Charter Renewal Application

Appendix B - 2012 Charter Renewal Application

A. Enrollment Change (Section B) - Page 4 of Appendix A - 2017 Renewal Application

The Sussex Academy is seeking to modify its current charter by 28% (at full capacity) through the addition of elementary grades K-5. Sussex Academy Elementary School would enroll 40 students per grade-level, or an additional 240 students to Sussex Academy's current maximum capacity of 840 students.

B. Grade Configuration (Section C) - Page 2 of Appendix B - 2012 Renewal Application

The Sussex Academy Charter School is requesting approval to expand its current charter configuration (Grades 6-12) to include Kindergarten through grade 5.

C. Enrollment Preference (Section G) - Page 65 of Appendix B - 2012 Renewal Application

The approved charter for Sussex Academy allows students not admitted through either the lottery or through another preference (sibling preference, employee preference or child of a Founding Member) a Special Interest preference as an additional means for acceptance to the school. Those interested in the Special Interest preference have the opportunity to write an essay and to participate in an interview for consideration for enrollment. Sussex Academy would like to eliminate this option as a part of the acceptance process.

D. Location Change (Section H) - Page 70 of Appendix B - 2012 Renewal Application

The current location of Sussex Academy would not change under the proposed modification; however, students enrolled at the Sussex Academy Elementary School would attend a separate campus located three (3) miles from the current Sussex Academy Campus in Georgetown, Delaware. (Proposed location: 22051 Wilson Road, Georgetown, DE 19947).

2. What is the effective date of the proposed modification?

Sussex Academy continues to work with its partners to ensure that the proposed modification and the addition of the elementary grades will occur, upon approval, at the opening of the 2020-2021 school year.

- 3 The authorizer will review your most recent Performance Review Reports as part of your application. Discuss the school’s academic performance, compliance with the terms of its charter, and financial viability as measured by the Performance Framework.

Sussex Academy continues to be one of the top performing schools academically in the State of Delaware and earned a rating of ‘Exceeds Expectations’ for Academic Performance on the Delaware School Success Framework as well as on all of the related measures included in the 2018-19 Annual Report (Appendix C - Sussex Academy Annual Report)

Additionally, student performance at Sussex Academy has far exceeded the State Average on annual State Assessments. (Table 1 - Below) Over the past five years, Sussex Academy’s ELA performance has been 37-43% above the State average and 35-44% above the State average in Mathematics.

Table 1: Performance on Annual State Assessments

	State Average ELA	Sussex Academy ELA	State Average Math	Sussex Academy Math
2019	53%	94%	42%	78%
2018	54	91	42	81
2017	55	96	43	87
2016	54	95	42	78
2015	52	95	39	74

- Source: Delaware Department of Education online Report Card (<https://reportcard.doe.k12.de.us/>)

Sussex Academy received an overall rating of ‘Meets’ the Standard on the Organizational Performance Framework included in the 2018-19 Annual

Report as well as on all of the related measures (Appendix D - Performance Framework Report).

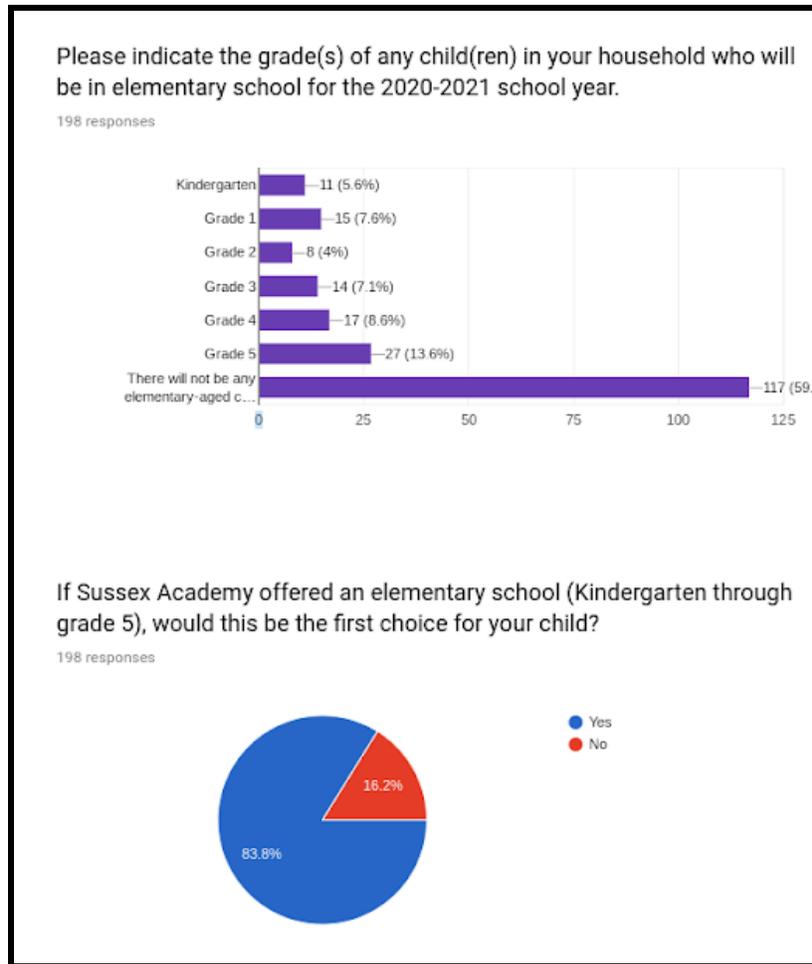
Sussex Academy received an overall rating of “Meets” the Standard on the Financial Performance Framework included in the 2018-19 Annual Report. (Appendix D - Performance Framework Report). Sussex Academy continues to be financially viable and experiences annual budget surpluses thus increasing the overall unrestricted reserves available to the organization. (Appendix E - Sussex Academy Financial Position).

- 4 Describe the rationale for the request(s). Discuss any relevant research base or evidence that supports this type of request. *(Attachments may be provided)*

The rationale for the request is multi-faceted. First, this modification proposal will respond to growth in Sussex County and the pressure of overcrowding placed on a few surrounding districts. A new elementary school option will help to alleviate the strain on resources that neighboring schools currently experience. Next, families living in Sussex County have limited access to successful charter programs. Sussex Academy has been the only public charter school in Sussex County since its inception in 2000. Although a second charter school is scheduled to open in the county in the fall of 2020, the mission of the newly approved school differs from the proposed programs at Sussex Academy through the addition of the Sussex Academy Elementary School. Parents seeking a strong academic program similar to that of the Sussex Academy Middle/High School would have an elementary school option for their children. Families looking for world-language learning opportunities will be provided an additional option at Sussex Academy Elementary School with a focus on Spanish. The implementation of our own elementary Spanish program will allow Sussex Academy to better align the school's offerings with programs already in place at the Sussex Academy secondary schools and will drive future course selections. A unique school facility will also allow for a focus on Environmental Science beyond what is currently available with traditional elementary Science programs.

An online survey was sent to current Sussex Academy families to determine the interest level for the addition of the elementary grades (K-5) as a part of our current charter. The survey was sent to the families of our 856 current students and yielded 198 responses (See Appendix G and Exhibit 1 below). Forty-one percent (41%) of respondents indicated that they would have at least one elementary-age child in their household during the 2020-21 school year, equating to 92 elementary-age children. Of these, 83.8% indicated that an elementary school at Sussex Academy would be the first choice for their child (87 students).

Exhibit 1.



While many parents are pleased with the elementary schools in their communities, the addition of an elementary school will provide Sussex Academy families with a comprehensive K-12 option housed in two buildings conveniently located to one another. An enhanced outreach program will allow us to focus on families living in under-served communities that are not highly represented currently at Sussex Academy. This outreach has and will continue to help to diversify our student population into one that will be representative of the area population which is ethnically, racially, and economically diverse.

Additionally, research on successful schools indicates the importance of developing community among students and the impact of comprehensive K-12 models on students' academic performance and social/emotional well-being. Establishing an elementary feeder system will help strengthen our school and foster a sense of community across all grade levels at Sussex Academy. Ongoing articulation between the elementary and secondary staff members would only strengthen the curricular offerings and would be easily achievable through a shared school calendar and joint professional development opportunities. Furthermore, the increased enrollment of Sussex Academy will help to leverage additional K-12 services for students through the State's Unit Count process, further supporting students' academic and non-academic needs.

- 5 Describe how the proposed modification will impact the operation of the school. Include how student achievement, staffing, facilities, and financial viability of the school may be impacted in the current school year and for the remainder of the school's charter term.

Currently, Sussex Academy enrolls students from ten different school districts, several area private schools, and students who have been home-schooled. As a result, our students have had inconsistent school experiences and varied levels/types of instruction. Students in grade 6, especially, have a very diverse set of academic skills. By establishing an elementary program that aligns with the mission and goals of the Academy's secondary programs, approximately one-third of rising middle school students would be coming from within the Sussex Academy framework each year. An elementary school program will help to better ensure that students arrive at the Sussex Academy Middle School prepared for the academic rigors the school currently places on students. Increases in overall achievement would be expected with roughly one-third of the students entering the middle school having already experienced a rigorous elementary program consistent with the expectations and mission of the current school.

Outreach to families from underserved populations will provide students with a comprehensive K-12 education option at an early age and establish strong connections with the school system. Academic and non-academic engagement practices that include students' family members as partners in their education will only strengthen students' educational experiences, thus providing greater opportunities for students than those that already exist.

The grade-level expansion will support funding for instructional staff through the Unit Count process. Classroom staff will be generated based upon the State's current funding formulas. Additional staff will also be made available to support the school's operations and non-academic supports (administrator, secretary, custodians, etc.) that will benefit new and current

students. Funds generated by the State's transportation formula will offset any additional transportation costs brought about by new eligible riders.

The purchase of the 43-acre Jefferson School facility by the Sussex Academy Foundation will provide a turn-key operation with educational infrastructure already in place. The facility will become part of the current lease agreement between the Foundation and Sussex Academy Charter School. Start-up costs will be substantially less than if the school were seeking to build a new school or inherit a structure not currently being used for educational purposes. Cost projections over the next four years, which include the addition of the Sussex Academy Elementary School, indicate that operating costs will be self-sustaining, with projections for additional reserve funds after year one. (Appendix F - Application Budget Worksheets)

The Sussex Academy is prepared to maintain its current financial viability through the support of the Sussex Academy Foundation and various grant sources that have supported the school in the past. Additionally, Sussex Academy continues to be financially viable and experiences annual budget surpluses thus increasing the overall unrestricted reserves available to the organization. (Appendix E - Sussex Academy Financial Position).

- 6 Indicate the projected impact, if any, of the proposed modification on the school's present financial position, and its financial position going forward. If the modification promises to create financial challenges, indicate how those will be remedied.**

Sussex Academy is and has been a financially secure charter school with annual budget surpluses for the majority of the years since operations began in 2000. The year when reserves were needed to balance the annual budget was marked by unusual, non-recurring events like moving to our new, larger location and, as a result, making significant technology, maintenance equipment, and furniture purchases needed to prepare the school for students. Any pressure on the school's financial viability will not rise to the level of that of the previous modification.

The Sussex Academy Executive Board reviews and discusses the school's financial operations monthly. The CBOC (Citizens Budget Oversight Committee) meets quarterly. The school has a financial audit conducted annually and has done so since its inception. The financial viability is sustained with the use of the data systems within the state including First State Financials and the annual audit conducted by an independent auditing firm. Sussex Academy has considered the financial impact with this request, as it has with previous modification requests, and the school is prepared to handle the anticipated costs to move forward.

There is no anticipated significant impact projected on the school's present financial position with the current request. Any additional costs associated

with the modification request are consistent with current financial obligations managed by the Sussex Academy Middle School/High School and do not create financial challenges moving forward.

Section B Questions:

1. Describe the nature and extent of the proposed changes to the school's current grade configuration, if applicable. Indicate whether you seek to add or cease offering a grade or grades, substantially increase or decrease current enrollment practices and/or projections for future enrollment, etc. *(Please make sure to indicate whether you seek an increase or reduction of enrollment of between 5 and 15% or more than 15% of the currently approved total enrollment and note that modification requests that fall into those ranges must be received by the Department of Education's Charter School Office between November 1 and December 31.)*

The Sussex Academy is seeking to modify its current charter through the addition of elementary grades K-5. At full capacity of 40 students per grade-level or 240 students grades K-5, the expansion will represent a 28% increase in the school's current approved enrollment of 840 students.

2. If your proposed modification involves an expansion of greater than 15% of your currently approved enrollment and the change will be effective within 18 months of the date of this application, identify the impacts of this expansion on the surrounding school districts and community for consideration.

****Please note:** In addition to meeting the approval criteria established in 14 Del. C. § 512, an authorizer considering a charter school's application for **expansion by more than 15% occurring less than 18 months from the date of the modification application** shall also consider impact of the proposed new school or expansion. **"Impact"** is the positive and negative effect that a new charter school or charter school expansion, if it should be approved, is projected to have upon the surrounding area and the education system of the state. Impact shall include educational, financial, and community information. In accordance with 14 Del. C. § 511(b)(4),

"Information regarding impact, as defined by regulations established by the Department with the approval of the State Board no later than October 31, 2014, shall be considered in conjunction with the factors in § 512 of this title but shall not alone provide the basis for disapproval of an application for a new charter application or an expansion. The information regarding impact may, however, be among the bases for disapproval of an application or expansion if at least 1 criteria in § 512 of this title is also deemed not satisfied by the authorizer. The information regarding impact may, by itself or in combination with other factors, form the basis for conditions being placed on the approval. Those conditions may include but shall not be limited to restrictions or prohibitions on geographic location, programmatic offerings, academic focus or emphasis, and grade

levels served. In no event shall the placement of conditions on approval, based solely or in part on considerations of impact, be considered disapproval of an application.”

For each application, members of the public will have the opportunity to submit public comments that describe the positive and negative impact that the proposed charter school will have on the surrounding area and the education system of the state. Based on the information submitted in these public comments, the Department of Education and the State Board of Education may propose conditions relating to impact. A charter applicant will have opportunities to respond to any proposed conditions at the CSAC Final Meeting, a public hearing, and in writing prior to the decision on whether the charter is approved.

While the charter modification will add an additional 240 students to the school's enrollment when the K-5 grade-level configuration reaches full capacity, both the immediate and long-term impact of the modification to the charter will not have a major impact on enrollment in the surrounding districts. Survey results of current Sussex Academy parents indicate that 84% of households who will have elementary-age students during the 2020-21 school year would elect to have their elementary student(s) attend Sussex Academy Elementary School. (Appendix G - Parent Survey Results) This equates to approximately 87 students from current families who would be committed to attend the school beginning in the fall of 2020.

Currently, Sussex Academy attracts students from all Sussex County school districts, with 70% of its students coming from two districts - Indian River and Cape Henlopen (See Table 2 - Sussex Academy Enrollment Make-up).

Table 2 - Sussex Academy Enrollment Make-up 2019-2020

District Name	Students Enrolled from District
Caesar Rodney School District	5
Cape Henlopen School District	320
Capital School District	3
Delmar School District	1
Indian River School District	303
Lake Forest School District	5
Laurel School District	32
Milford School District	51
Seaford School District	113
Woodbridge School District	23
TOTAL	856

● Source: Delaware Department of Education Unit Count Plus - **Charter Student Enrollment Verification**

Sussex Academy Elementary School is expected to have a similar student make-up, meaning that at full capacity roughly 170 students would come from these two districts, or about 85 students from each of the districts. In recent years, both districts have made attempts to address overcrowding in their schools, and their enrollment projections continue to show increases. The addition of the elementary grade-levels to the Sussex Academy Charter School will help to alleviate some of this overcrowding in these two districts without a substantial impact on enrollment. Eighty-five students in elementary grades K-5 represents 3% and 1.6% of the total district elementary enrollment for Cape Henlopen and Indian River, respectively, or less than 2% of each district's overall enrollment.

Additionally, the opportunity for elementary students to attend an elementary school with a rigorous academic program will draw more students back into the public school system. Each year, several Sussex Academy High School applicants come from students who attend home schools or private/parochial schools. An elementary option such as Sussex Academy Elementary School will bring students from surrounding communities into the public school system as early as kindergarten.

3. Describe the projected impact of the enrollment modification on the school's program, mission, culture and offerings (both academic and non-academic).

The mission of the Sussex Academy is to foster academic achievement and social responsibility in a small school environment where students participate in a highly accelerated college preparatory program that prepares them for the technological and global mindedness needed for the 21st century and that instills ethical conduct and service to others in their day-to-day lives. The modification request will not change the mission of Sussex Academy but will instead strengthen opportunities for the school to fulfill its mission. The addition of the elementary grades to the Sussex Academy Charter School will enhance the academic and community culture of the school. The location of the proposed Sussex Academy Charter School includes facilities that will benefit both elementary and secondary students alike. The 43-acre campus includes fitness trails, two ponds, and a greenhouse, creating new learning opportunities not available at the school's current campus. An additional multi-purpose room, with gymnasium and music classroom with a stage, offers a new venue for performances and exhibitions (Science fairs, arts shows, etc.) Greater opportunities for students to fulfill their community service requirements will become available as high school students will interact with elementary students through academic and non-academic programs. The elementary Spanish program will further strengthen the Sussex Academy High School's ability to move more students toward the IB Bilingual Diploma by immersing more students in Spanish language and Spanish literacy at an earlier age.

4. Please complete the “Projected Enrollment Table” below:

Projected Enrollment

- a. Provide a five-year enrollment chart by grade level, in the prescribed format below. Ensure that the chart allows for the natural progression of students from year-to-year.

Note: This will become the school’s authorized enrollment if the modification application is approved.

Projected Enrollment						
	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
K		40	40	40	40	40
Grade 1		40	40	40	40	40
Grade 2		20	40	40	40	40
Grade 3		20	20	40	40	40
Grade 4		20	20	20	40	40
Grade 5		20	20	20	20	40
Grade 6	122	125	125	125	125	125
Grade 7	125	122	125	125	125	125
Grade 8	130	125	122	125	125	125
Grade 9	147	130	130	130	130	130
Grade 10	120	147	130	130	130	130
Grade 11	117	120	147	130	130	130
Grade 12	97	117	120	147	130	130
Total	858	1046	1079	1112	1115	1135

Section C Questions:

1. Describe the nature and extent of the proposed changes to the school's current grade configuration. Indicate whether you seek to add or cease offering a grade or grades, substantially increase or decrease current enrollment practices and/or projections for future enrollment, etc. *(Please make sure to indicate whether you seek an increase or reduction of enrollment of between 5 and 15% or more than 15% of the currently approved total enrollment and note that modification requests that fall into those ranges must be received by the Department of Education's Charter School Office between November 1 and December 31.)*

The Sussex Academy Charter School is requesting approval to expand its current charter configuration (Grades 6-12) to include Kindergarten through grade 5. This modification would potentially increase the Academy's enrollment by 28% (at full capacity) through the addition of elementary grades K-5. Sussex Academy Elementary School would enroll 40 students per grade-level, or an increase of 240 students to Sussex Academy's current approved capacity of 840 students.

2. Provide an overview of the planned curriculum, including one scope and sequence per subject area per grade band (K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12) for each grade level that will be affected by this modification. The scope and sequence documents should identify course outcomes and demonstrate clear alignment with the Delaware Content Standards (including Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics, and Next Generation Science Standards) in all content areas. Summarize curricular choices, by subject, and the rationale for each choice, including research and other evidence of effectiveness. If the modification includes a commitment to join the Social Studies and/or Science Coalition, then a signed MOU would replace the scope and sequence requirement for Social Studies and/or Science.

The Sussex Academy Elementary School will establish a rigorous academic program consistent with the current Sussex Academy Middle School and High School curriculum. The State-approved Standards will drive its instructional program (Common Core Standards for ELA and Math and the Next Generation Science Standards), with additional opportunities to accelerate learning through the use of research-based supplemental activities and individual student technology. The school's focus on Environmental Science and Spanish will provide a unique educational program that is not offered locally.

English Language Arts

Sussex Academy Elementary School will incorporate a balanced literacy program using research-based elements of comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, phonemic awareness and phonics. Instruction will combine whole group, small group and one-on-one instruction in reading, writing, and

speaking and listening. While curriculum materials will focus on the Delaware Content Standards, extra emphasis will be placed on content-rich classic and multicultural literature in conjunction with explicit phonics instruction to develop reading skills in K-2 to develop students' ability to transition from learning to read to reading to learn. Additionally, writing assignments will be included in all content areas for a variety of purposes and projects consistent with the middle/high schools' existing program. Activities will range from daily journal writing to short and long-term writing projects. Students will use elements of style relative to a wide variety of genres, including but not limited to historical fiction, poetry, folk tales, adventure, and mystery.

The Academy has selected ReadyGen as its ELA curriculum. ReadyGen has received high marks in all Gateways by EdReports. (Source: <https://www.edreports.org/reports/overview/readygen-2016>) (Appendix H - ELA Curriculum Documents)

Mathematics

Sussex Academy Elementary School will utilize the Common Core Standards for Mathematics as a framework for its Math curriculum and will teach mathematics using a problem-based learning approach. Teachers will introduce mathematical concepts through a problem-solving approach and will facilitate rich classroom conversations that promote a growth mindset and result in a deeper conceptual understanding. This process allows for learners to develop skills used for their future practice. Curriculum materials will provide an emphasis on visual learning with the use of one-to-one technology resources and include opportunities to assess and differentiate student learning.

Personalized and adaptive learning opportunities will encourage students to build their mathematical understanding and demonstrate proficiency. Independent practice and problem-solving activities will help students build mathematical proficiency and promote higher-order thinking. Teachers will also develop number sense in students so that they understand the underlying concepts of the operations they perform (addition, subtraction, multiplication, division). Students who have strong number sense can solve problems in more than one way, and check that their answers make sense.

The Academy has selected Ready Common Core Mathematics as its Mathematics curriculum. 'Ready Math' has received high marks in all Gateways by EdReports.

(Source: <https://www.edreports.org/reports/overview/ready-2017>) (Appendix I - Math Curriculum Documents)

Science

The Next Generation Science Standards will drive Sussex Academy's science program. The Academy currently has a signed MOU with the Delaware Science Coalition and will continue to use resources provided through the coalition. (Appendix J - Science Coalition MOU)

The proposed Sussex Academy Elementary School facility provides additional Environmental Science resources through its on-site ponds and hands-on outdoor classroom facilities. The site is a certified Wildlife Habitat and was named 2019 US Department of Education Green Ribbon school. (Appendix L - Facility Certifications)

Students will conduct investigations, solve problems, and engage in discussions in Science with teachers' guidance. They will also discuss open-ended questions that focus on the strength of the evidence used to generate claims and conduct investigations with a range of possible outcomes that collectively lead to a deep understanding of established core scientific ideas. Students will also be expected to write complete journal writing, write reports, and create media presentations that explain and argue their understanding of scientific concepts. Intermediate students (Grades 3-5) will present their research findings through annual Science Fair projects, similar to the Sussex Academy Middle School Science Fair that has existed since the school's inception.

Social Studies

The Academy currently has a signed MOU with the Delaware Social Studies Coalition and will continue to use resources provided through the coalition to address the Delaware Social Studies Standards. Consistent with the school's mission, Sussex Academy will develop students to become informed and active citizens who accept their responsibilities, understand their rights, and participate actively in society and government. Our students will be able to research issues, form reasoned opinions, support their positions, and engage in the political process, even at the elementary grades. (Appendix K - Social Studies Coalition MOU)

Spanish

The implementation of our own elementary Spanish program will allow Sussex Academy to better align the school's language offerings with programs already in place at the Sussex Academy secondary schools and will drive future course selections. Sussex Academy currently has an International Baccalaureate (IB) program. The IB Bilingual Diploma is one of the highest regarded diploma programs worldwide, and the Sussex Academy Elementary program will establish the foundation for students to be able to obtain the program diploma upon graduation.

The program will focus on Spanish Literacy, building students language and literacy skills in conjunction with the ELA program. This model will also provide Spanish-speaking ELL students the opportunity to become bilingual learners, holding onto their native language while developing literacy skills in both Spanish and English.

3. Provide one Mathematics unit of instruction with corresponding summative assessments and scoring rubrics, and one ELA unit with corresponding summative assessment and scoring rubrics to demonstrate alignment of instruction to the Delaware Content Standards (Common Core State Standards in ELA and Mathematics). If the school does not intend to join the Delaware Science or Social Studies Coalitions, then 1 Science unit and 1 Social Studies unit with corresponding summative assessments and scoring rubrics to demonstrate alignment of instruction to the Next Generation Science Standards and Delaware Social Studies Content Standards are also required.

**Appendix H - ELA Curriculum Documents
Appendix I - Math Curriculum Documents
Appendix J - Science Coalition MOU
Appendix K - Social Studies Coalition MOU**

Section G Questions:

1. Describe the reasons why the current enrollment preference practices are problematic and require revision.

The approved charter for Sussex Academy allows students a Special Interest preference as an additional means for acceptance to the school when he/she has not been admitted through either the lottery or through another preference (sibling preference, employee preference or child of a Founding Member). Those interested in the Special Interest preference have the opportunity to write an essay and to participate in an interview for consideration for enrollment. The perception has become that some families have used the essay option as a means to circumvent the process when a child has not been accepted through the approved lottery methodology.

2. Discuss how the modification will solve the current problems and ultimately benefit the school.

The elimination of the Special Interest option ensures that Sussex Academy remains true to its approved lottery and preference methodology without the perception of a back-door option for enrollment as discussed in question 1. Furthermore, beginning in 2020 Sussex Academy will be using Data Service Center to conduct our enrollment lottery. Having a third party contractor conduct this process will further eliminate any questions related to the adherence to the State-approved process for admittance.

3. Identify any changes to the school's program that will likely result from the modified preference practices.

The elimination of this component of the school's preference criteria will not have an impact on the school's program.

Section H Questions:

1. Please describe any challenges that the current school facility presents. If the modification is approved, will it generate any new challenges and describe how you will address them.

The current Sussex Academy facility is not equipped to accommodate elementary students. Implementation of the proposed modification would require the acquisition of an additional property or new construction specifically to house the Sussex Academy elementary grades (K-5). The Sussex Academy Foundation intends to purchase the 43-acre Jefferson School facility which will provide a turn-key operation with educational infrastructure already in place. Sussex Academy will then enter into an agreement to lease the property from the Foundation similar to the existing agreement for the middle/high school facility. Start-up costs will be substantially less than if the school were seeking to build a new school or inherit a structure not currently being used for educational purposes.

2. Please describe the proposed location of the school. Include information about siting, space available, costs to the school (and how they differ from the current facilities arrangement), safety, any co-located programs sharing the same facility, the quality of the instructional and non-instructional space and any other significant factors impacting the attractiveness and viability of the proposed facility.

The proposed Sussex Academy Elementary School sits three (3) miles from the current Sussex Academy facility. The site is already equipped for elementary-aged students as it is currently operating as the Jefferson School, a private school serving students in Sussex County. (Appendix M - Proposed Location; 22051 Wilson Road, Georgetown, DE 19947). The site has 16 classrooms, more than enough to house the Sussex Academy Elementary School's proposed enrollment. Sussex Academy will enter into a lease agreement with the Sussex Academy Foundation for the use of the facilities and will become the facility's lone tenant. The facility currently houses a private school and has security resources in place. Minimal security updates will be needed to better limit access to the school to outside visitors.

The school campus is nature-centered and allows for hands-on educational opportunities with its two ponds, trails with five family fitness stations, a garden, and a greenhouse. The site provides a perfect setting to incorporate the high academic standards of Sussex Academy at the elementary level, with a focus on Environmental Science and technology. Additionally, the facility's newly constructed multi-purpose room with gymnasium, music room, and stage will provide opportunities for Visual and Perform Arts and extracurricular activities consistent with the middle and high school offerings at Sussex Academy.

3. Describe the projected impact of the location modification on the school's program, mission, culture and offerings (both academic and non-academic).

With the infrastructure of the new elementary location and the established management systems of Sussex Academy, the Sussex Academy Charter School will expand to one cohesive K-12 charter school. In doing so, we will marry the well established academic, financial, and operational success of the current school with the unparalleled, unique hands-on learning opportunities at the proposed elementary site. The facility will serve students in their foundational years prior to their transition onto the accelerated academic program at the Sussex Academy Middle School/High School campus.

4. Articulate a facility usage plan for the school going forward. Will the proposed location solve space needs for a limited amount of time or permanently? Will further modifications be required?

The proposed location will accommodate enrollment projections for the first few years of operation. The current facility has 16 classrooms. When the Sussex Academy Elementary School reaches its maximum capacity, additional classroom space may need to be constructed to ensure the school is able to meet the academic and non-academic needs of its students. Additional office and instructional space may be needed for related arts classes (Art, Library Media, computer labs, etc.) and RtI classrooms as the school nears the proposed maximum enrollment.