

U.S. Department of Education
2016 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

For Public Schools only: (Check all that apply) [] Title I [X] Charter [] Magnet [] Choice

Name of Principal Dr. Patricia S. Oliphant

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Sussex Academy

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 21150 Airport Road

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Georgetown State DE Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 19947-5573

County Sussex County

Telephone (302) 856-3636 Fax (302) 856-3376

Web site/URL http://www.sussexacademy.org E-mail info@sussexacademy.org

Twitter Handle _____ Facebook Page _____ Google+ _____

YouTube/URL _____ Blog _____ Other Social Media Link _____

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Dr. Patricia S. Oliphant E-mail patricia.oliphant@saas.k12.de.us
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Sussex Academy Tel. (302) 856-3636

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____
(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mrs. Jennifer Scott
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

**Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

Part I – Eligibility Certification

The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The public school has met their state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) using the most recent accountability results available for the year prior to nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, a public school must meet the state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) for the year in which they are nominated (2015-2016) and be certified by the state representative. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2010 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, or 2015.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2015-2016) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 0 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 0 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 0 High schools
 - 1 K-12 schools
- 1 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
 - Suburban with characteristics typical of an urban area
 - Suburban
 - Small city or town in a rural area
 - Rural
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2015 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	57	73	130
7	49	80	129
8	53	77	130
9	50	52	102
10	27	36	63
11	14	26	40
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	250	344	594

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 3 % Asian
 - 5 % Black or African American
 - 9 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 77 % White
 - 4 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2014 – 2015 school year: 0%

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	0
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	0
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	0
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.000
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	0

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 1 %
2 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):

Spanish

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 22 %
Total number students who qualify: 124

8. Students receiving special education services: 5 %
31 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- 6 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 2 Emotional Disturbance
- 0 Hearing Impairment
- 0 Mental Retardation
- 0 Multiple Disabilities
- 2 Orthopedic Impairment
- 7 Other Health Impaired
- 11 Specific Learning Disability
- 2 Speech or Language Impairment
- 1 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 1 Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 13
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers	30
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	8
Paraprofessionals	6
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 0:1
12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	95%	97%	96%	97%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**
Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2015.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.
Yes No X

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

15. In a couple of sentences, provide the school's mission or vision statement.

The mission of the Sussex Academy is to foster academic achievement and social responsibility in a small school environment where students participate in an 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.

16. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

Students can apply to Sussex Academy from November to January. Applications are accepted online as well as at the school. Confirmation numbers are sent to all applicants upon receipt of an application. A public lottery is held in January.

The lottery proceedings are open to the public with Board members in attendance. All guests sign in. While parents would have received a confirmation number, student confirmation numbers are available to individual parent(s) on the day of the lottery.

During the lottery the director explains the lottery procedures, notification of parents and registration dates. The director explains the preference applications and the procedures for accessing information. The Board President pulls envelopes (with application information) randomly and passes to another Board member. That Board member removes the student information sheet from the envelope, announces the confirmation number and hands the student information sheet to the school secretary. The secretary places the lottery number in the top right corner of the information sheet. Three additional Board members maintain a duplicate of the lottery number on a prepared roster.

Following the lottery, the school secretary, in coordination with Data Services Center, prepares letters and posts the lottery results on the school website. An automated call is made to all applicants notifying them when the results have been posted.

PART III – SUMMARY

Sussex Academy currently operates as a charter school authorized by the Delaware Department of Education. Opened in 2000 the Sussex Academy of Arts & Sciences began as a 225-pupil middle school located in a newly constructed facility at 21777 Sussex Pines Road in Georgetown, Delaware. The school's mission was to provide an accelerated middle school program in a small, safe school environment for students who resided in Sussex County Delaware. Within three years of its opening, Sussex Academy made two minor charter modifications to first expand to 300 and then to 325 students. The school renewed its charter for 2003-2008 and then again for 2008-2013 with only minor changes in structures and expectations. However, the Sussex Academy leadership took on a new challenge when it submitted a major charter modification to the Delaware Department of Education in 2011 so as to begin adding high school grades in the 2013 school year. Sussex Academy was approved for another five-year charter renewal (2013-2018) to include the middle school and the addition of a high school grade each year over a four-year span. Now during the middle years of that renewal, the school population includes grades 6-11 with grades 6-8 constituting the middle school and grades 9-11 constituting the high school. We will have our first graduating class in June 2017.

During the current 2015-16 school year, the school population is comprised of 594 students in grades 6 through 11 and composed of 42% male and 58% female; 77% majority and 23% minority; and a 22% poverty rate. Interestingly, these demographics are similar to those of Sussex County as posted by the U.S. Census Bureau. Generally speaking, the vast majority of student applicants reside in one of the six school districts located in Sussex County, which is 936 square miles in size. Sussex County is basically a rural area that is home to family farms and the Delmarva Poultry Industry on the western side and a growing tourism/beach area on the eastern side. Sussex Academy is located in Georgetown, the county seat, home to county government, various courts, and said to be "16 miles" from all geographic borders of Sussex County. While our building is located within a large school district, Indian River, we are not part of that district, but as a charter school operating independently from any school district. Our authorizer is the Delaware Department of Education.

Early in 2012, so as to meet facility demands for adding high school grades, the Sussex Academy Foundation executed an agreement with an independent school, Delmarva Christian High School, to exchange buildings. This has entailed a major capital campaign by the Sussex Academy Foundation to raise \$15.1 million so that Sussex Academy could occupy its new facility at 21150 Airport Road in June 2013. In moving forward to a new facility and an expanded program, the Executive Board shortened the school's name to Sussex Academy and endorsed a new tagline, school colors and mascot beginning in the school year 2013-14. The tagline is "Explore . . . Experience . . . Excel" with school colors of blue, purple, and silver; our mascot is the Seahawk – a bird of prey indigenous to every continent except Antarctica.

Sussex Academy uses an Expeditionary Learning framework that was adopted by the Executive Board seventeen years earlier. With a vision "to cultivate students of distinction by providing them with the knowledge, skills, and values to become successful, productive citizens," teachers engage students in hands-on, project-based activities where authentic learning, interdisciplinary studies, and intercultural understanding are the lynchpins of the curriculum. While teachers have a great deal of flexibility to make instructional and curriculum decisions, we subscribe to several school-wide practices that are non-negotiable. These include such things as 6+1 Writing, C-SET, a literacy focus across all contents, portfolio development, student service, and a school culture based on respect and responsibility. When we decided to add high school grades, we chose the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme. We believed that it meshed with our philosophical beliefs about performance, expectations, and school culture. Our high school juniors are now in their first year with the IB Diploma Programme. Meanwhile, as state standards, common core standards, and new assessments have evolved, we have modified our curriculum to meet those shifts. Teachers use best practices, work collaboratively, and facilitate student learning to meet the state and common core standards. Further, parents work collaboratively to support students' intellectual pursuits, ethical character development, and service to the community.

As the school has evolved, it is evident that it has met the mission of the original founders. Sussex Academy students consistently have met or exceeded the state standards as evidenced through the states' testing and accountability system. It continues to provide an accelerated curriculum with Highly Qualified and skilled

teachers. It continues to be a safe school where children are valued and the expectation is that students, staff, and school will practice the “3R’s”: respect for others, respect for property, and responsibility for self and others.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

At Sussex Academy in grades 6 – 8, students take reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies along with five exploratory courses. Reading and writing are separate subjects. This means that students engage in almost 90 minutes of literacy instruction every day. Both the reading teacher and the writing teacher collaborate relative to reading and writing topics and skills. At the middle school over the three-year period students study both fiction (realistic, historical, short story), poetry, and drama. Also they study nonfiction, nonfiction. Literary devices and terms are emphasized as well as text structures, vocabulary, and point of view. Teachers have the latitude to select the reading texts they wish students to read. There is a separate writing class at each grade level as well. During each of the three middle school years students use writers workshop and the writing process with "6+1 Writing Traits" as the common language under girding the writing program. Students write narrative, informative, and argumentative pieces multiple times during the year. Further, literacy instruction is fused into the other three contents of mathematics, science, and social studies. We have chosen to do this because we believe that literacy must be the instructional focus at the middle school level. Without a strong literacy foundation, students are disadvantaged in other content areas.

In mathematics, Sussex Academy uses an integrated math program consistent with the Common Core Standards. We have made adjustments in our math curriculum consistent with Common Core as certain standards moved to lower grade levels. For example in grades 6, 7, and 8 students learn ratios and proportional relationships, the number system, expressions and equations, geometry, and statistics and probability. Further, since Algebra I is taught at grade 8 students learn arithmetic with polynomials and rational expressions, equations, reasoning with equations and inequalities.

In science, we follow the state content standards and are determining how the Next Generation Science Standards will impact science teaching. Our science classrooms are lab-based in instruction. Sixth grade students learn the scientific process, the human body, force and motion, earth history, and simple machines. Grade 7 students learn the properties of matter, diversity of life, genetics, and watersheds. Grade 8 students learn transformation of energy, planetary systems, weather, and ecosystems. Likewise, in social studies we use the State of Delaware social studies content standards to guide our curriculum. However, we place a heavier emphasis on the study of history and weave civics, geography, and economics through historical studies so as to study and discuss mankind's development in the world. In grade 6 students learn physical and human geography, Ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt, late Ancient History and Greece, along with civics, and economics. In grade 7 students further learn geography, late Ancient Greece and Rome, Medieval World with Arabia, China, and Europe, and economics. Then in grade 8 students learn United States history from colonization through the Civil War.

For our high school program, we offer a college preparatory program. This means our high school offerings are essentially pre-IB in grade 9 and 10 and IB (International Baccalaureate) for students in grades 11 and 12. While we have electives at the high school, the courses of English, mathematics, science, social studies, and Spanish are the building blocks for four-year studies.

In English students take either Honors English 9, 10, 11 and 12 or at grades 11 and 12, they take IB Literature HL (Higher Level). In grade 9 students improve and refine critical reading and literary analysis inclusive of fiction and nonfiction. They analyze literary themes, structures and use techniques of research and technology to produce written and oral compositions. At grade 10 students explore the general themes of stories, storytelling, and how humans communicate through literature. Grades 11 and 12 includes study of World Literature. Those in IB Literature explore values and issues of world-wide culture. Student take the external IB exam, complete an Oral Commentary and Interview as well as the Individual oral Presentation. All students must take four years of core English. In addition all ninth grade students take an Elements of Writing course and a Research and Writing course.

In high school mathematics students take either Honors Algebra I or Honors Geometry (proofs, shapes, reasoning and logic), Honors Algebra 2, (advanced linear, quadratic, exponential, logarithmic, and polynomial functions), Honors Pre-calculus (previous math study, complex functions, systems of equations, conic sections, trigonometric ratios and functions, inverse functions, and trigonometry), IB Math SL (Standard Level) (advanced algebra trigonometry, statistics, probabilities, and calculus topics, IB Math HL (Higher Level) (problem-solving in advanced algebra, trigonometry, induction proofs, statistics, and probabilities, and in-depth calculus topics). All students must take four years of mathematics.

In high school science students take Honors Integrated Science during grade 9. This course includes physics, chemistry and earth science. In grade 10 they take Honors Biology that includes nature of science, cells, genetics, and evolution. At grade 11 students take Honors Chemistry or IB Chemistry SL (Standard Level). Honors chemistry includes data processing, chemistry atomic structure, periodicity, bonding, energetics and kinetics, while IB Chemistry SL is more advanced to include equilibrium, acids and bases, oxidation and reduction, organic chemistry and medicinal chemistry. In grade 12 students can take IB Design Technology SL (Standard level), Honors Physics, Anatomy and Physiology, or Honors Environmental Science as their fourth year of science.

In world language Sussex Academy only offers Spanish at this time: Honors Spanish 1, Honors Spanish 2, Honors Spanish 3, Honors Spanish 4. Students who are more advanced can opt to take IB Spanish SL (Standard Level) or IB Spanish HL (Higher Level). Spanish courses are designed to give students knowledge and fluency in the spoken and written word. Students are immersed in the language, learning vocabulary, conversation, and culture. As the students advance they hone grammatical skills, compound verb tenses. The IB Spanish courses focus on deeper linguistic skills, writing, reading, and speaking with attention toward international mindedness. Students take IB assessments.

In addition to four credits each in English, mathematics, science, social studies, and Spanish, students must select three courses within a career pathway. At Sussex Academy there are two options: communications and STEM. In the communications pathway students must take at least three courses beyond any English core courses to complete this pathway. They may take communicative arts, journalism, print media, digital photography, cultural expression, drama, or desktop publishing. If students chose the STEM pathway, they must take three credits in Introduction to Engineering Design, Principles of Engineering, or IB Design Technology SL, or Introduction to Computer Programming.

In addition to these requirements, all students 6-12 are required to complete community service. All middle school students must complete 10 hours of individual community service in addition to any service project that the grade level team may engage in. They must also maintain a portfolio of their academic work. At the high school level, students must complete a CAS (creativity, action, service) project. All high school students are required to take the IB course, Theory of Knowledge, where they must reflect on the nature of knowledge and examine the role of language and thought in knowledge. Our aim is to develop thinking young men and women who are reflective about their own understandings and who give back to their communities.

We believe that all students are pushed and expected to perform at higher levels. In order to support students who are struggling, we provide the following: paraeducators in classrooms, extra-time for Response-to-Intervention (RTI) needs, before school and after school help programs. We monitor the progress of each student and our grade level teams make quarterly adjustments for additional help for struggling students.

Sussex Academy has chosen curriculum and instructional approaches so as to fulfill its mission "To foster academic achievement and social responsibility in a small-school environment where students participate in an accelerated college preparatory program that prepares them for the technological and global challenges of the 21st century and fosters ethical conduct and service to others in their day-to-day lives."

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Sussex Academy offers opportunities in other curriculum areas. Within the middle school (6-8) these classes are taken during what are called "Exploratories." In the high school these courses are commonly referred to as "Electives."

During the middle school Exploratories, teachers act overtly to introduce, maintain, and reinforce a culture of respect and responsibility as a school-wide practice. These exploratory teachers introduce a unit at the beginning of the school year and continue to reinforce school-wide values through intermittent lessons throughout the year. In their specific contents they use the state content standards as their guides for instruction. All of the middle school students take art, music, physical education/health, computer, and technology (STEM) education.

In art students create works of art, select media and processes, and use a variety of perspective techniques. They frequently engage in projects for specific school or community events. In music students gain literacy in notation, timbre, unison and polyphonic, genre, intonation, style. They learn about musicians and cultures and demonstrate knowledge of music's connection to society. In physical education students learn about and engage in physical activity. They gain knowledge about movement concepts, and skills development in individual and team sports. In computer students learn to use and apply applications as word, excel, powerpoint, photoshop, and garage band. They use and apply these technology tools while also learning health education topics about nutrition, healthy relationships, drugs/alcohol, bullying/cyberbullying, transportation and safety, violence and suicide prevention. In STEM students engage in hands on activities to problem-solve, create and design products while applying mathematical and scientific knowledge.

As described in section 1, high school students must take three courses in one of two pathways - communications or STEM. In addition, all tenth grade students are scheduled for a "College Prep" class. This class is designed to have students complete college searches, investigate the application process, and funding for college. In addition, tenth grade students can elect to participate in Driver Education which consists of classwork and behind-the-wheel training emphasizing safety, defensive driving, and accident prevention. Students also have a credit requirement for physical education where individual fitness and team sports are offered. Further, students can elect to participate in band, where students learn advanced music for performance and festivals, chorus where students learn correct vocal production in a variety of musical styles, and theater where students practice for dramatic productions.

At the present time there are smartboards and document cameras in every classroom for teacher and student use. At the middle school we have one computer for every three students and at the high school each student has an ipad. Technology use is abundant in both practical applications and specifically designed curriculum through STEM and computer courses.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Sussex Academy's primary instructional focus is literacy; its primary pedagogical approach is to use common best practices in all classes, specifically modeling, content specific vocabulary, and critical thinking and questioning strategies. Teachers use a project-based approach with attention to as many authentic learning opportunities as practical while basing instructional activities on the Common Core Standards and Delaware Content Standards. In its early years, Sussex Academy chose to use Expeditionary Learning as its model. The early teachers were trained and retrained in that approach. As the time has worn on EL has been modified; Sussex Academy continues to use many of the structures and added the IB Diploma Programme. In both middle school and high school there is a team structure in place; this means that each team has a leader with each teacher on the team having specific duties for operation of the team. The team leaders meet monthly. In addition, another set of leaders, called the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) confer monthly. They are charged with being the leaders of their content departments thereby assisting with both instructional and curriculum modifications, professional development, and coordination across contents.

In general, students are heterogeneously grouped at the middle school level. Math is the one area where there is more deliberate homogenous grouping. At the high school level, choice of courses is the primary mechanism for grouping students. There are two levels of courses, Honors and IB. Teachers work together to align the courses and scaffold instruction within their content areas.

Our middle school model is one that is based on the Common Core Standards and state of Delaware Content Standards where teachers create interactive, collaborative classrooms. Students approach learning through discovery, critical thinking, short and long term projects, and problem-solving. Students connect learning to authentic problems and issues. At both the middle school and high school students will be involved in both team and school-wide expeditions. In the middle school students maintain portfolios and must complete service individually and as grade level groups. In the high school students are involved in academic classes that are pre-IB and IB (International Baccalaureate).

At Sussex Academy we strive to build a culture of respect, responsibility, resiliency where we provide school structures to foster those traits. A huge part of this culture includes service to others. At the middle school all students must complete 10 hours of community service each of the three years. At the high school each student must complete 25 hours in grades 9 and 10 and complete a longer CAS project during grades 11 and 12. Additionally, our Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) at both the team and department level foster collaboration, professional learning, and data-driven decision-making. We look at student performance and subscribe to a continuous improvement model. Both a set of Team Leaders and an Instructional Leadership Team provide leadership in school operations and curriculum.

Through this shared leadership, each grade level team looks at student data and makes quarterly decisions about instruction and interventions. These interventions include smaller group instruction with pull-outs on occasion and paraprofessional support for individual and small groups as well as push-in support for the TAM classes. There is a time set aside daily for RTI in literacy and mathematics. There are also enrichment RTI groups in other content area subjects. We have a before school program that is open to all students and an after-school program for struggling students. In addition, teachers have set up their own tutoring sessions before school, after school and at lunch.

4. Assessment for Instruction and Learning and Sharing Assessment Results:

Sussex Academy uses a variety of assessment data that is analyzed to improve instruction. First, teachers prepare and assess students in individual content areas. Since they follow the Common Core Standards and Delaware Content Standards, they use rubrics to evaluate student work. As departments they share the assessment results of their students and discuss the rigor and relevance of their assessments. In addition, they use the content specific pre and post-tests that have been developed by the state. In department groups, they determine the goals for student performance and their own performance. They also use the Smarter Balanced Assessment and the specific content Delaware Comprehensive Assessments. Again these data are analyzed both for internal review and comparative review with other schools in the state of Delaware. Now that we have high school classes, we are also reviewing data from PSAT and SAT. We are in the beginning stages of this review because currently our high school is for grades 9 – 11 students.

Parents, students, and the community are informed about student performance. First, students and parents receive mid term and nine-week progress reports. Parents have access to online grades for their child(ren). Parents also receive reports of any standardized testing that is done for their child. Additionally, the Board and the community receive reports on standardized testing of Sussex Academy students.

At this time, the achievement gap of the majority group or subgroups is less than 10 percentage points. Gaps are addressed through the supports described in Section 3. Instructional Methods and Interventions.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Sussex Academy provides a supportive environment academically, socially, and emotionally for students. We hire professional, well-trained teachers who want to teach in the school and who want to teach students, not just content or subjects. As a faculty we spend time through our leadership teams and on our grade level teams developing both team expectations and school culture wrapped around responsibility, respect, and resiliency. The general expectation is that faculty and students will be respectful and kind to one another. This expectation for the school is also held and reinforced by parents. To “reward” students, grade level teams have celebrations as does the school at-large. These celebrations include “rewards” trips, assemblies, and other school-wide assemblies that have become traditions in the school. For example, on the fourth day of school we have an assembly for all middle school students where they discuss their first days of school and how we want to treat one another and how we want to treat our property. Our eighth grade students participate in etiquette classes and ballroom dancing instruction as a precursor to an 8th grade luncheon before “moving up” to high school. Our ninth grade students participate in an overnight trip at Cape Henlopen State Park where they establish goals for themselves, work on team building, collaborate on building a boat made of cardboard, and conducting boat races. These are just a few of the celebrations and traditions that have evolved over time at Sussex Academy.

We want our teachers to feel valued and supported through meetings and gatherings that we hold whether those be on professional development days or other events supported by the Sussex Academy Foundation, a non-profit group whose sole purpose is to support the school. The types of events that the Foundation sponsors are the Dragon Boat Festival, Race for Education, a Winter Gala, and for the first time this Spring, a Kentucky Derby Party. These are major fund-raising efforts by the Foundation for our school. Our Executive Board is very supportive of our faculty and present them with gift cards in December as a gesture of appreciation for their commitment and hard work. The Board works to budget the schools funds such that teachers get salary increments or bonuses to their pay. The Executive Board also recognizes faculty and staff with 5 year, 10 year, and 15-year service awards.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Sussex Academy has had a great deal of success with engaging families. First, we host open houses at the beginning of the year. The purpose of these is to provide information to parents by the child(ren)’s teachers about the up coming school year. We will experience a 75-85% participation rate by the parents at all grade levels. By teams, teachers also host individual parent-teacher conferences that are well attended. Our arts programs, band, chorus, and theater, are supported by parents, grand-parents, and other family members. We host a grandparent’s day in March that allows extended family members an opportunity to visit classrooms and observe their grandchildren in action. Orientation events for new incoming sixth graders and an new incoming high school students provide a lower risk opportunity to get to know our school and staff prior to attending. We will experience about 100% participation in these events.

Another way we engage the community are those events sponsored by the Sussex Academy Foundation that were cited previously. A new endeavor this year is our book drive for our new library; we have asked parents to help select and donate books and other resources for the new facility. With that, we have a local bookstore that hosts book sales at our school. This book fair is sponsored by our PTO. Two parent groups, the PTO and the Sports Boosters, are actively engaged in supporting our school and our athletes. The PTO has committed to providing a new technology lab every five years.

Other ways we engage families and the community are through our students’ and school’s outreach in community service. That can entail such activities as raising funds for leukemia, cleaning up the town of Georgetown, conducting “Ghost Tours” in the town of Georgetown, having a shoe drive to help provide cleaner water resources in far-away lands, conducting events for veterans, biannual food drives, family adoptions at holidays, and so many more. Each year every middle school student must complete at least 10 hours of independent community service. The service hour expectation for the high school students

increases incrementally as the student move from grade 9 to 12. Additionally, each grade level will conduct one to three service projects in and around the communities per year.

3. Professional Development:

All professional development topics are determined by the faculty or the state. Each year the Instructional Leadership Team looks at student and faculty data to determine what the faculty has determined that they need to work on. In the most recent past the types of professional development have been geared toward the Common Core Standards, the next Generation Science Standards, and the International Baccalaureate Programme. Examples of how the activities are aligned with academic standards and support student achievement include our two-year work in a strategy for argumentative writing. Our faculty and administration worked with the University of Delaware on a strategy called CSET (Claim, Setup, Evidence, Tie-in). All of our teachers in all content areas received training in CSET and use this strategy within their classes as a mechanism for getting students to understand how to make a claim and support that claim through the argumentative writing process. This particular strategy is aligned to all contents within Common Core and to the statewide test known as SBAC (Smarter Balanced Assessment). Another example includes the high school's training in the International Baccalaureate Programme. This year they have been working on the vertical alignment (6 through 12) of courses within each of the content areas such that students can experience success in their preparation for college and on the IB assessments that the students will take in their senior year.

4. School Leadership:

Student Performance is very important at Sussex Academy. The school administration and school leadership make performance a priority and support the students and faculty in providing a school culture and environment conducive to high performance. The school administration has put structures in place within the school that focus on student performance and continuous improvement. The school has in place grade level teams in which there is a leader and other designated roles that each team member must assume (i.e. field work, parent liaison, special education, discipline, etc.) These grade level teams meet regularly each week. There is also an Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) whose role is to guide curriculum and instruction and maintain, analyze, and monitor information and data about the performance of the students and the school. Both of these groups meet monthly. The content person (ILT member) on the grade level team acts as the liaison at grade level team meetings to facilitate curriculum and instructional decisions that are consistent with other teams in the school.

The Directors of the school meet monthly with both the grade level Team Leaders and the ILT to facilitate and lead these groups' work. For example, at our last school-wide professional development day, the math department was making decisions about a proposed change in instructional materials and mathematics text book series while the science and technology departments were reviewing Next Generation Standards and the alignment of the courses within these content areas. The Social Studies department was planning a school-wide expedition slated for next November and the English Language Arts department was reviewing RTI materials and resources for reading. The Exploratories were planning a Kindness Day for our school culture initiatives. The Instructional Leadership Team and the Team Leaders directed all of these individual department activities. These topics and the related work are part of a year-long professional development plan that was developed last Spring for this school year. The topics emerged as a result of the departments looking at student data and determining what was needed to continuously improve and have students at Sussex Academy perform at a high level.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Sussex Academy is as successful as it is because of its commitment to shared leadership – the collective intelligence being greater than the individual – and its decision to make literacy the instructional focus of the school. Our attention at middle school of providing approximately 90 minutes per day of literacy is a cornerstone of our students’ success. In addition to that, we have school-wide practices around that literacy model that necessitates the infusion of literacy across all content areas. The expectation and practice at Sussex Academy is that all students will advance in literacy every day by reading, writing, speaking, listening, and presenting every day. We believe the evidence that this practice ensures performance was evidenced with the first administration of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) in the Spring of 2015. While we have consistently outperformed every school (except one) in the state, we were thrilled to receive our Spring SBAC scores where we outperformed every middle school in the state and our “Gap” students outperformed all others as well. We will continue to analyze data and make adjustments to ensure that our students are performing in every content area. At the present time, we are looking more deeply at our mathematics and are getting ready to make a change in what we are doing at the middle school while trying to adjust what we are doing in high school.

Our ultimate indicator of success will be realized once we begin to have graduating classes. We believe that students who spend seven years with us Experiencing our program and Exploring their potential will have expanded themselves to the point of Excelling and being admitted to and succeeding at the college or university of their choice.