



August 2022

Dear Sterling Montessori Parents and Families,

It is with great pleasure and anticipation that I draft this first, inaugural letter of welcome! Welcome to the 2022-2023 school year at Sterling Montessori. We are thrilled you have chosen us and we consider it a deep blessing and high honor to teach, guide, and grow with your children this school year.

As Maria Montessori once said, *“It is not true that I invented what is called the Montessori Method. I have studied the child, I have taken what the child has given to me and expressed it, and that is what is called the Montessori Method.”*

As your newly hired Executive Director, I hope to first lead and listen in the coming year – listen to the entire Sterling Montessori community, children, staff, parents/guardians, families and the LHU Board Members. I hope through listening and my weekly commitment to being present with you and our students and staff that I am able to provide a safe space for all to communicate honestly, respectfully, and openly. My hope is that by doing this work together we will come to a collaborative list of next steps.

You may not know this – but I started listening back in May, long before I was hired or even called for a second round interview. There is a lot you can hear buried, even in entry level interview questions. And in the months since my initial video interview, I have heard and know that this community has been through a lot of change in the last year. Moving forward, we are a strong community committed to Montessori practice and we will continue to move in the direction of collaboration and communication.

I also know that Sterling Montessori has a lot to be grateful for – there is so much wonder, grace, joy, curiosity, and beauty in this place. I can feel it! And I know as we start warming up for the fall that this year is going to be a brilliant one. We are going to make it brilliant with our patience, our compassion, our due diligence, hard work, and our graceful modeling of speaking bravely and honestly on things that matter most. I can’t wait for these conversations and this shared work. It will make this place shine with a radiance rarely seen in institutions of our size and stature. It will be an illuminating process.

Before I get to the details of our start in August and the adventure before us, I want to take a moment to acknowledge that I am new to the area. While I know many of you probably read

my bio in the letter from our Board President, Elizabeth Uzzell, earlier this summer, I thought it would be nice to briefly introduce myself. I hail from a small town in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains and spent my early years gardening and playing in the forests close to my home. As an adult, I have learned to love biking, quilting, swimming, and I read voraciously. My partner and I have already started exploring the bike trails that the region has to offer and are hopeful to spend some time out in the forests near our home this fall. Our pup, Tallulah Jo, will be eager to join us. Feel free to reach out if you also love these things and have recommendations for either Brett or me. We look forward to getting to know everyone at Sterling and would love to connect on your favorite things to do in North Carolina.

For work, please know I pride myself on being a close and compassionate observer. I am a hard worker, who cares deeply for the safety and well-being of children. I was a Lower Elementary Montessori guide before I moved into Administration and I believe I was hired by the LHU Board this past June because of my deep commitment to Montessori in the public sector and my ability to observe and listen. I am here. I want to get to know you and this special Montessori community. It is the only way I can lead well. Please don't hesitate to reach out. I would love to connect.

In the enclosed packet is so much useful information – please review it with care and consideration. Please also know, if you have questions or concerns, reach out first to your grade level directors. Feel free to cc me to your communication if you feel like that is needed.

Finally, I would like to take a moment to announce a few staff shifts that have taken place over the summer.

We would like to acknowledge that Frances Foner (Lower Elementary Lead) and Samantha Falcoz-Vigne (Upper Elementary Assistant) have both found new positions and will not be returning to Sterling in the fall. We wish them well on their continued work in education and their new adventures.

We have hired and would like to welcome Patti Booker, our newest Primary Assistant in A6. Britney McMillan will be the new lead in B8, who is 3-9yo Montessori trained. Her assistant will be Ginger Harris, who was moving up from Children's House. Sydney Bullock started her Montessori training this past summer and will be the lead in B2. Anshu Jain will assist Vaish in B4. In Upper Elementary, Mary Deans Romero will be our lead in D12 and Patricia Calle joins us to lead D14. We would also like to welcome Martyna Kowalska as a new assistant in D14, replacing Samantha Falcoz-Vigne. Our newly hired elementary floater is Insaf Abdullah. In Middle School, we will be welcoming Dr. Derek Starkenburg as our new science and math teacher. Daniel Stevenson will be our new Physical Education Assistant.

In our EC program, we would like to welcome Gloria Jones as our new director. Joining her team are Teresa Pollock as our newest EC Resource Teacher and Kelly Pasquarella as a Behavior Support Assistant. Finally, we would like to formally welcome Aushequa Harris to Sterling as our new Office Manager.

We are still looking to fill our Technical Project Manager, Communications Manager and three to five Aftercare (BASC) program staff at the 1st through 8th grade level.

As your new leader, I am confident that we will find all the highly qualified staff we need to start this fall strong. Thanks again for choosing to be part of the Sterling community. We will continue to run a school in service to you and your children. Our work brings to mind a sentiment from Rachel Carson's book *A Sense of Wonder* quoted below:

"A child's world is fresh and new and beautiful, full of wonder and excitement. It is our misfortune that for most of us that clear-eyed vision, that true instinct for what is beautiful and awe-inspiring, is dimmed and even lost before we reach adulthood. If I had influence with the good fairy who is supposed to preside over the christening of all children, I should ask that her gift to each child in the world be a sense of wonder so indestructible that it would last a lifetime, as an unfailing antidote against boredom and disenchantment of the later years."

Sincerely,

Maureen Capillo
Executive Director
Sterling Montessori Academy & Charter School

