



THE STINGRAY SUN

ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

JUNE 2023 • ISSUE 4 • VOLUME II

STERLING MONTESSORI



AMERICAN MONTESSORI SOCIETY®
education that transforms lives

EST. 1997

FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Sterling Families,

Thank you! What a great first year it has been. I was thrilled to accept this position last May and was eager to start in mid-July.

We did so much together as a community. We formalized more robust evaluative rubrics collaboratively with our staff, recommitting as a group to the never ending process of learning and growth. We launched our Peaceful Schools professional development and training, to gain experience and practice in managing conflicts, peer to peer and also learned how to better serve our students in modeling difficult conversations and promoting restorative justice practices school wide. Our partnership with Peaceful Schools will continue into next year. We observed children and ourselves more frequently – knowing that the foundation of a strong Montessori program is embedded in being scientists. Every good scientist finds time to observe – daily, weekly, and monthly. Our staff will continue this work of building their capacity as strong observational practitioners next year. Finally, we ate together in community and started reaching out and inviting our parent community back on to campus more regularly – with evening Parent Engagement events at the Children's House level, end of year Picnics and 3rd Grade Celebrations at the Lower Elementary level, and a host of special student led events based in educational learning across the Elementary years that were scattered throughout the year.

We are thrilled with our progress and growth. We are excited to embark on this adventure of learning with our students, staff, and families again in the fall of 2023-2024.

We hope you all have a tremendous summer and we look forward to seeing you, bright and early, on Thursday, August 24th, 2023 for our first day of school next year.

All the best,
Maureen Capillo
Executive Director
Sterling Montessori

STERLING'S MISSION

The mission of Sterling Montessori is to create a diverse educational community, grounded in the Montessori philosophy and teaching practices, that fosters curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking in its students. We strive to empower each student to become life-long learners who respect themselves, others and their environment.



STERLING'S VISION

Sterling Montessori is a model charter school that demonstrates how the Montessori Method and a commitment to academic excellence helps students reach their full potential. We envision a sustainable, accessible, and diverse institution that graduates thriving students who are engaged in lifelong learning and are empowered to become positive, contributing members of their immediate and global communities.

LAURA HOLLAND UZZELL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Board Annual Review

This year, the LHU Board got the opportunity to exercise our most important duty: hiring an Executive Director. Maureen has brought energy, experience, and deep knowledge to our school and we remain excited about our future with her at the helm.

One priority for Maureen this year was sending a big, representative group to the American Montessori Society (AMS) conference. Three LHU Board members joined several directors and many teachers in Boston for the Montessori Event. It was an incredible opportunity to learn and laugh, but most importantly, to connect with other Montessorians. As a school, we have been around so long, it's easy to forget that we are part of a diverse and vibrant global community. We appreciated Maureen's invite, and look forward to participating again next year! Participation in this event showed us that we are on track to complete next steps for AMS accreditation.

In spring of this year, the Board was able to meet in person (special shout-out to Board VP Rachel Richardson, who provided space and coordinated meals for us!). We reviewed our work so far in diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI): creation of the DEI committee, writing and publishing our DEI vision, completing an equity audit, posting the glossary and FAQ to the school website, encouraging student involvement, and beginning to review our policies with a DEI lens. We continue to articulate our long-term strategy in the 1, 3, 5 year plan which will be shared soon.

We addressed our fiscal responsibility by completing a budget review with Sterling's CFO, Betty Warren, and had a productive conversation about our long term vision for the school. This is part of an ongoing conversation addressing our current strategic plan and looking ahead to our next strategic plan, when we will need and solicit our community's input. Many of our bigger goals will hinge on development. Maureen and Stephanie have done a great job of pushing for 100% involvement from different groups in our school, including directors, teachers, and families. I'm proud to share that 100% of the Board contributed to the Annual Fund, and I look forward to seeing 100% contribution from our whole community next year.

As many of you may know, the Board's namesake, Laura Holland Uzzell, passed away this spring. Her early support, both financial and emotional, ensured the future of Sterling. In her memory, the Laura Holland Uzzell Scholarship was created, so her legacy can continue to shape Sterling's future. The LHU Foundation was started as a scholarship fund in 1993, and so as we celebrate 30 years as a nonprofit, we also celebrate this opportunity to fulfill our founding purpose. The LHU Scholarship will allow us to welcome more families into our academy who could not previously afford it. Laura loved children, especially the youngest ones, so this seems an especially fitting tribute. If you feel moved to contribute to this scholarship fund, please visit sterlingmontessori.org and click donate.

This year has marked a return to in-person learning and gathering, allowing us to reconnect with our precious community. We look forward to continuing to grow together.

In peace,
Elizabeth Uzzell
LHU Board President



2022/23 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Katie Brown
Kim Elliott
Jessi Fasola
Leslie Hamilton
Ryan Hill
Kevin Hughes
Chris Morton
Rachel Richardson
Elizabeth Uzzell
Robert Wolfe
Lan Zhu

2022/23 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

This spring, **twenty-one Sterling Staff and three LHU Board members attended** the annual American Montessori Society (AMS) conference. Each March, AMS hosts one of the largest Montessori conferences in the world. This year over 5,000 participants gathered in Boston. Our team learned a lot and again built bridges across grade levels and departments to deepen our shared work. This trip also brought understanding to those parts of our job that sometimes cause conflict. It was an experience that gave everyone a broader lense to our important work.

Children's House Professional Development & Parent Enrichment Night



The Children's House teachers have been dedicated to their professional development, focusing on enhancing their knowledge and skills in the Positive Discipline approach. During the months of August-December the CH team read the book ***Positive Discipline in the Montessori Classroom***, they attended weekly training sessions, and participated in collaborative discussions to deepen their understanding and implementation of this approach.

On February 23rd, the Children's House team held a **Parent Enrichment Evening** where they had the opportunity to share their learnings with parents. Through a short presentation and meaningful conversations, the teachers provided valuable insights into the **Positive Discipline** approach, equipping parents with effective tools and strategies to nurture their children's social-emotional development and foster a positive learning environment at home. The Parent Enrichment Evening proved to be a fruitful collaboration between teachers and parents, fostering a strong partnership to support the holistic growth and well-being of the children in our community.

Elementary i-Ready Assessments, Positive Discipline & Montessori Workshops

New to Lower Elementary this year is the **i-Ready Diagnostic**. This is a computer-adaptive assessment that identifies students' strengths and weaknesses, measures growth, and supports data-driven differentiated instruction. It provides comprehensive insight for student learning across a variety of K-12 skills and offers teachers the necessary information to meet the needs of all students.

Children's House, Lower and Upper Elementary Assistants received 12-weeks of professional development with **Positive Discipline workshops**. These weekly training sessions and interactive workshops provided tools for all to use immediately in the classroom. Assistants worked collaboratively across levels and shared insights of the results observed.

Several Lower Elementary Assistants attended **Montessori Lesson Workshops** for four consecutive weeks after school. These workshops helped Assistants learn the materials in a way that better supports students and the Lead Montessori Guides.



STERLING HAPPENINGS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

We sent our Upper Elementary and Middle School students on a total of **four overnight trips**, creating a whole lot of memory making experiences. Upper Elementary students went to BJP and Agape. Our Middle School students went on a fall camping trip and then to western North Carolina in the spring. All four trips created the space for students and staff to live, learn, and grow outside the classroom.

UE AGAPE TRIP



Director Liz Macaulay had the privilege of joining one of the UE trips to Agape for the morning. She witnessed the **Montessori mission in action**, empowering children to become active participants in their own education while nurturing their love for the world around them. The Montessori approach, with its emphasis on independent exploration and hands-on experiences, beautifully resonated with the spirit of the Agape Learning Center. As the students ventured into the natural world, their curiosity and love for learning came to life in a profound way. She observed the children engaging with the environment, eagerly absorbing knowledge about plants, animals, and the intricate ecosystems surrounding them. The trip provided a rich tapestry for the children to **develop their senses, continue to cultivate their innate sense of wonder, and foster a deep connection with nature**. They learned not only about the scientific aspects of the natural world but were encouraged to understand their role as caretakers of our planet. Thank you for trusting us with your children and for providing them with learning opportunities which will allow them to become **changemakers** in our world.

MIDDLE SCHOOL DEI COMMITTEE

We are excited to highlight the remarkable efforts of our middle schoolers who are our **student representatives for Sterling's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee**. They spearheaded a groundbreaking initiative focused on promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion within our school community.

In this **student-led project**, two students took on the role of educators, delivering developmentally appropriate lessons to each Upper Elementary classroom on the definition and impact of microaggressions. Through engaging and interactive sessions, our middle school mentors empowered their younger peers to recognize and address subtle forms of discrimination, fostering a more inclusive and empathetic environment.



By promoting understanding and respect at such an early age, we are nurturing a generation of **compassionate leaders** who are committed to creating a brighter and more inclusive future for all.

SPECIALS HAPPENINGS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

MUSIC

The Music Program was able to hold both indoor and outdoor concerts. All Upper Elementary classes were able to **attend the NC symphony**, something that hasn't been done since before COVID. The Upper Elementary classes were able to all learn ukulele chords this year, as we now have a full classroom set. Sue Ann was able to **resume all indoor singing** activities for all levels and held lessons that layered singing and instrumental skills together.

In a Sterling First, the Middle School band traveled to the Festival of Music at Kings Dominion on Friday, April 28th. They performed and were judged on three pieces of music and earned **a Superior Rating!** We are so proud of their hard work and the leadership of Ms. Sue Ann and Ms. Liseth to help guide them in this amazing achievement.



SPANISH

This year Spanish embarked on several new projects geared to the school community. Students in Upper Elementary created **a "wings" mural** inspired by Frida Kahlo. The mural was displayed near the Sports Court for students and families to take their winged pictures. Students celebrated learning about the **Day of the Dead** by decorating Calavera (skull) cookies and watching the movie *Coco*. During the spring, students in Middle School used their learned Spanish to **create beautiful brochures**. 7th graders focused on foods from a specific Spanish-speaking country and 8th graders practiced their informal command form of verbs to create a travel brochure to a Spanish-speaking city. Students also worked to create a beautiful **outdoor space** for the Spanish classroom, helping assemble furniture and decorating and maintaining the area for upper El and Middle School use.

In Spanish classes with Ms. Olga, we worked in small groups using our Montessori Spanish materials. During the LE Spanish classes students learned new **vocabulary** and how to play **games**. We covered **colors, foods, family** members, **furniture**, and **numbers** during the LE Spanish classes this year. Spanish speaking countries, capitals, months, days of the week, and seasons were also topics of interest.

SPECIALS HAPPENINGS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

ART

Art was able to establish and **create their outdoor environment** including tables, pathways and a small bridge. Student artwork started being shared in the main office on the monitor which was updated monthly. MS students did some new projects including creating sculpture projects out of cardboard and a stop motion animation project. UE, LE and CH students were introduced and used a variety of art mediums (yarn, clay, paint, pastels) and artists.

For Teacher Appreciation Week, while studying portrait work, the **teachers were gifted with amazing student artwork** that brightened their week! Can you guess who these folks are? Staff LOVED this!



PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Last fall we were very fortunate and had a **center court divider curtain** installed in the Sport Court. This allowed us to divide the court in half and safely have two activities occur simultaneously. For example, during Middle School classes we were able to have archery on one side and a volleyball activity on the other. During our Lower and Upper Elementary classes we could split the court in half and have two smaller games going on, allowing for more students to be involved in the activities. With our students from Children's House we used the curtain to make the court seem smaller and helped our younger students focus a little better during times of instruction.

This year, **more free choice days** were implemented in PE, where students could choose their activity(ies). These were the classes where the most students were engaged. We set up a slack-line, a volleyball net, and a basketball hoop was made available. We had mats to build with, Jenga blocks to play with, unicycles to ride, and a balance board to work on. The activities changed during the year to keep up with students' interest, allowing us to focus on different physical aspects as well.

Mr. Daniel, our new PE teacher, also learned about our PE program and the cycle of the year. He shared new ideas which were then added to the PE curriculum.



SENSORY PATHS WITH THE EC DEPARTMENT

This year Sterling incorporated new **Sensory Paths** for children to use in all three Sterling buildings. In an effort to help Sterling students to **improve sensory regulation** by working off excess energy, improving gross motor skills and spatial awareness, increasing focus, and improving emotional regulation skills,

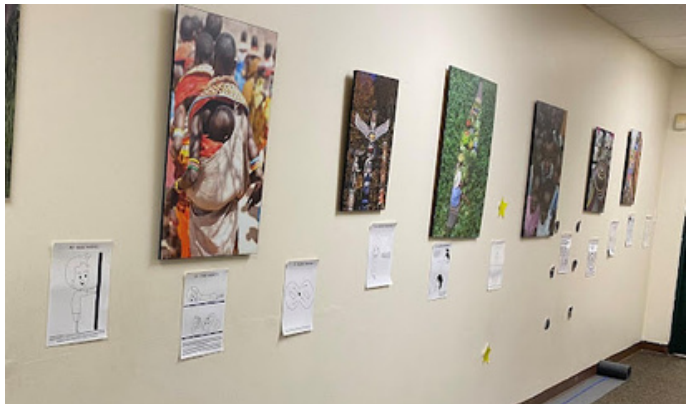
Jeff Strobl, Behavioral Specialist, and Trish McCabe, Occupational Therapist, of the Exceptional Children's Department, introduced a school-wide plan to implement sensory paths for all students to access. Jeff and Trish collaborated with administrators and then presented the idea to the Sterling Staff. The idea was well received by the staff so age specific sensory paths were developed for each building. All teachers and assistants were trained during CH, LE and UE section meetings to ensure the sensory paths' usage was understood by all. There were also some whole classrooms and individual student trainings, as well, upon teacher request. All lead teachers in Lower and Upper Elementary were given their own copy of a 10-station sensory path for their classroom to use. Children's House implemented a floor based sensory path. Children's House also gave sensory activities to each CH classroom to be implemented into their classrooms and outdoor environments

Below are pictures of the current sensory paths at Sterling:

A Building Path



B Building Path



C Building Path

In addition to the wall paths, Cathy Constantine, Lower Elementary Director, and Trish collaborated on obtaining **floor based sensory paths** for B and C buildings. There are plans in the works to expand our sensory paths outdoors for students to access during outdoor breaks. Trish is also working with a 5th grade student as part of the student's Girl Scout project, to develop a **sensory path outside for Upper Elementary and Middle School** students to use. Additionally, Trish also developed a path for the Lower Elementary playground. The goal is to have both of these projects completed over the summer break.

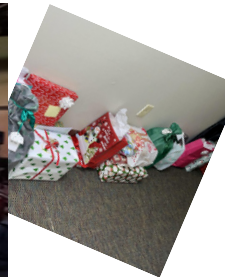
Thanks to all who have supported this endeavor and I look forward to continuing this work in the fall!
Trish McCabe, OTR/L
Occupational Therapist

PARENT FACULTY STUDENT ASSOCIATION

"We shall walk together on this path of life, for all things are part of the universe and are connected with each other to form one whole unity."



Our PFSA brings **COMMUNITY** to our community, and we so appreciate our Chairs and volunteers that are invaluable to *any* event that happens on campus. Without volunteers, these events won't happen! Consider being a part of the PFSA by participating, or even chairing an event! We are open to ideas!



"I'm a mother of two boys, and we live, study, and work in Morrisville. We love our diverse community and we pass by Sterling Montessori School every day. My youngest son, will start Kindergarten in August, so I wanted him to get familiar with the school environment and to participate in school activities early on. We also wanted to contribute to the school community. We have always been actively involved in community service and we know that everyone's efforts can make our community a better place.

I believe parent volunteering can have a significant impact on the quality of education and school culture, and can ultimately benefit the children in many ways. It shows the children that their parents are interested and invested in their education, which can motivate them to take their studies more seriously. Additionally, seeing their parents actively participating in school events can make the children feel more connected to their school community.

I want to experience the school for myself, by interacting with the teachers, and attending school events. One way to positively impact the school is through parent volunteering. Volunteering provides an opportunity for parents to build relationships with other parents and teachers, which can create a more supportive and collaborative school environment. Additionally, volunteering can help parents develop new skills and gain a better understanding of the school's curriculum and operations. When parents get involved in school events and activities, they can become more connected to the school and better equipped to support their children's learning and development. In this way, parent volunteering can play a significant role in building a stronger school community.

I understand the challenges faced by a Charter school like Sterling Montessori, especially after the pandemic. That's why I believe that events like the International Festival are essential to bring people together and to promote cultural diversity. So I reached out to Paige myself, hoping to participate in this event. Our family is diverse, with my Chinese background and my husband's Mexican heritage, and we speak Cantonese, Mandarin, Spanish, and English at home. We love multiculturalism and trying different cuisines, and I'm glad that the event allowed us to showcase Chinese and Mexican cultures."

-Natalie Martinez, 23/24 Sterling Parent & International Festival Volunteer



STERLING'S 2022/23 PFSA CHAIRS

It's said it takes a village, and this is certainly the case for Sterling! We are sincerely so grateful for this group of individuals that **give their time, energy and enthusiasm** to bring happiness and joy to our community! **Thank you all so very much!**

- HOSPITALITY/ TEACHER APPRECIATION: **Jenn Jewett & Cari Farris**
- INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL: **Paige Ossman**
- CLASS PICTURES: **Laura Chintapalli**
- FALL FUNDRAISER: **Jenn Jewett**
- GARDEN DAYS: **Kidist Maxwell & Shristi Shrestha**
- MOVIE NIGHTS: **Lisa Hicks**
- GIVING TREE: **Cari Farris**
- HOLIDAY TREAT EXCHANGE: **Julie Disclafani**
- SPIRIT WEAR: **Sarah Krummenacker**
- PFSA COMMUNICATIONS: **Sarah Krummenacker & Julie Hughes**

We also thank all the unnamed volunteers who gave their time and support to these community endeavors!

OUR PARTNERS

"The aim of such an education indicates the desire to contribute to the good of all, to share in this cosmic goodness." - Dr. Maria Montessori

NATIVE LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Sterling Montessori sits on the ancestral land of the Tuscarora, Lumbee, and Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Tribes. As we strive to become better stewards of the environment, we also strive to provide a more equitable and culturally responsive environment for all students, especially Black and Indigenous students of color.



Instituto Nueva Escuela (INE) accompanies Puerto Rican school communities that have opted for the public Montessori model as an active agent to achieve social transformation. It's Mission is to accompany, train and serve the communities in Puerto Rico through Montessori public education for the development of prepared beings that contribute to the common good.

For the 2022/23 school year, Sterling partnered again with the local non-profit The Caring Place. This organization teaches homeless, working families with children, life skills for attaining independent living while providing short-term housing and support services to address their individual needs. Their weekly educational series have been an offering to our community, with interesting, age-appropriate topics we hope our families have enjoyed.

We look forward to continuing the partnership for a third year for 2023/24, following the three-year cycle. This partnership will continue to include the close partnership with our Student Council to deepen our collaborative relationship throughout the school year.



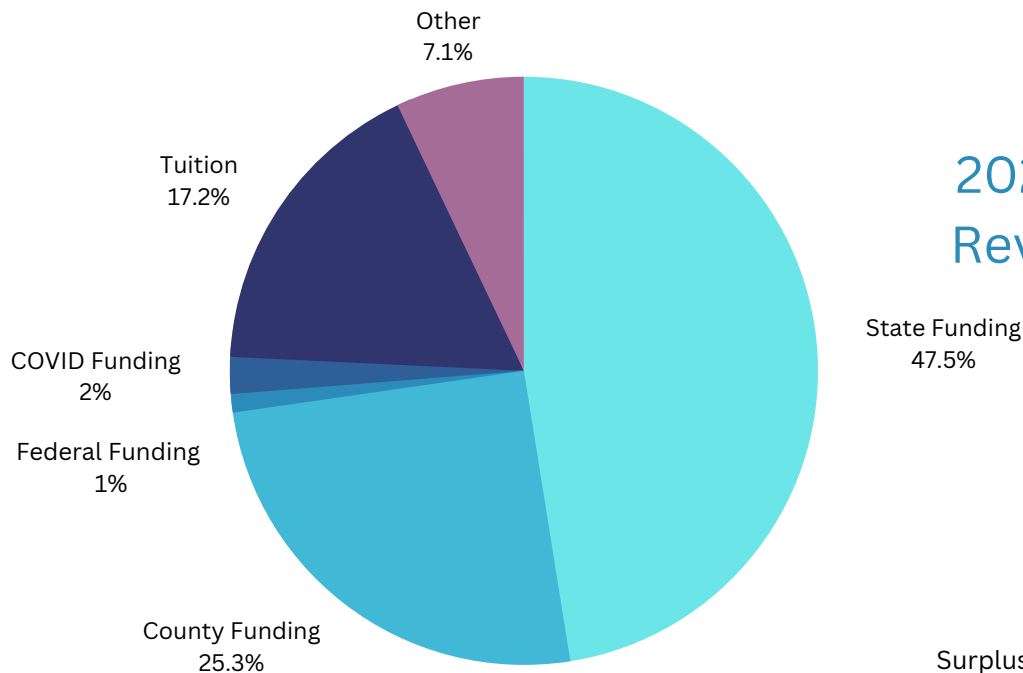
Part of our Montessori directive is to also give back. Through our collections, **we have earmarked 10% of proceeds each year to give back to the larger community through our community partners.** These three organizations will receive **3.33% of our Annual Funds** as donations to a higher cause. That means, this year, each will receive a donation of over **\$1,100** for their outstanding work for our land, children and the world. We are proud to be partners in their endeavors.

STERLING'S 2022/23 REVENUE & EXPENSES

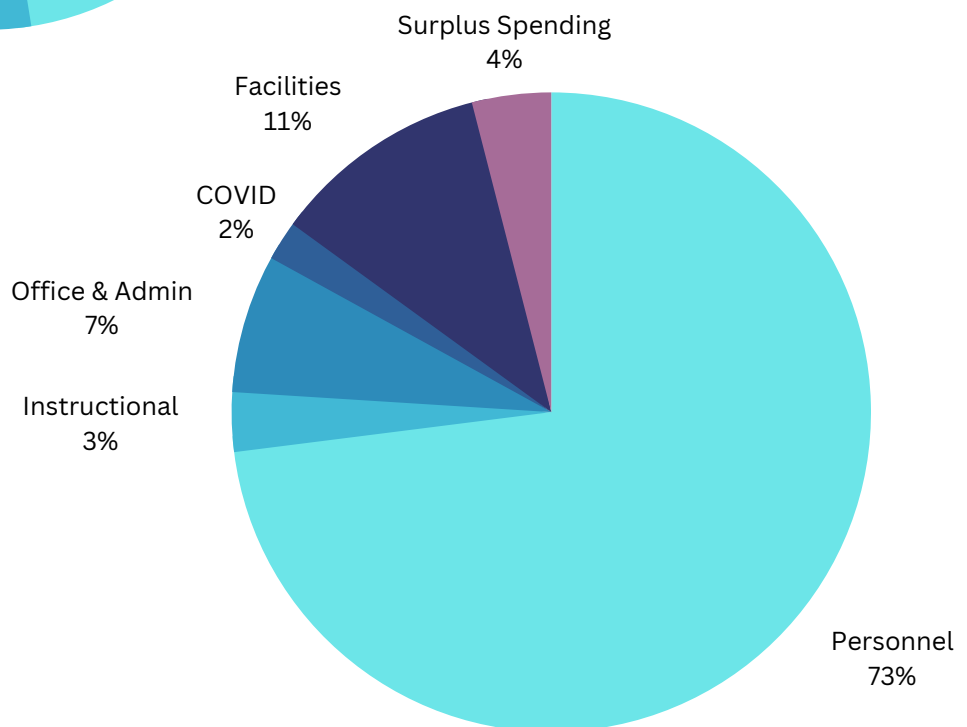
Our development office has been hard at work the last couple years tracking the Annual Treasure Chest Fund. Many in our community may wonder, why should I donate? Isn't the school funded by our state?

Charter Schools are a special case. There is a substantial funding gap between charter schools and public schools. According to the Center for Education Reform, charter schools are funded nationwide on average at 64% of their district counterpart. The largest reason for this shortfall is that charter schools do not receive capital funding from the states. While Sterling is fortunate to own and operate the buildings that make up the campus, most of the campus is over 20 years old, which increasingly requires significant capital maintenance that is not funded.

2022/23 Sterling Revenue (\$8.8M)

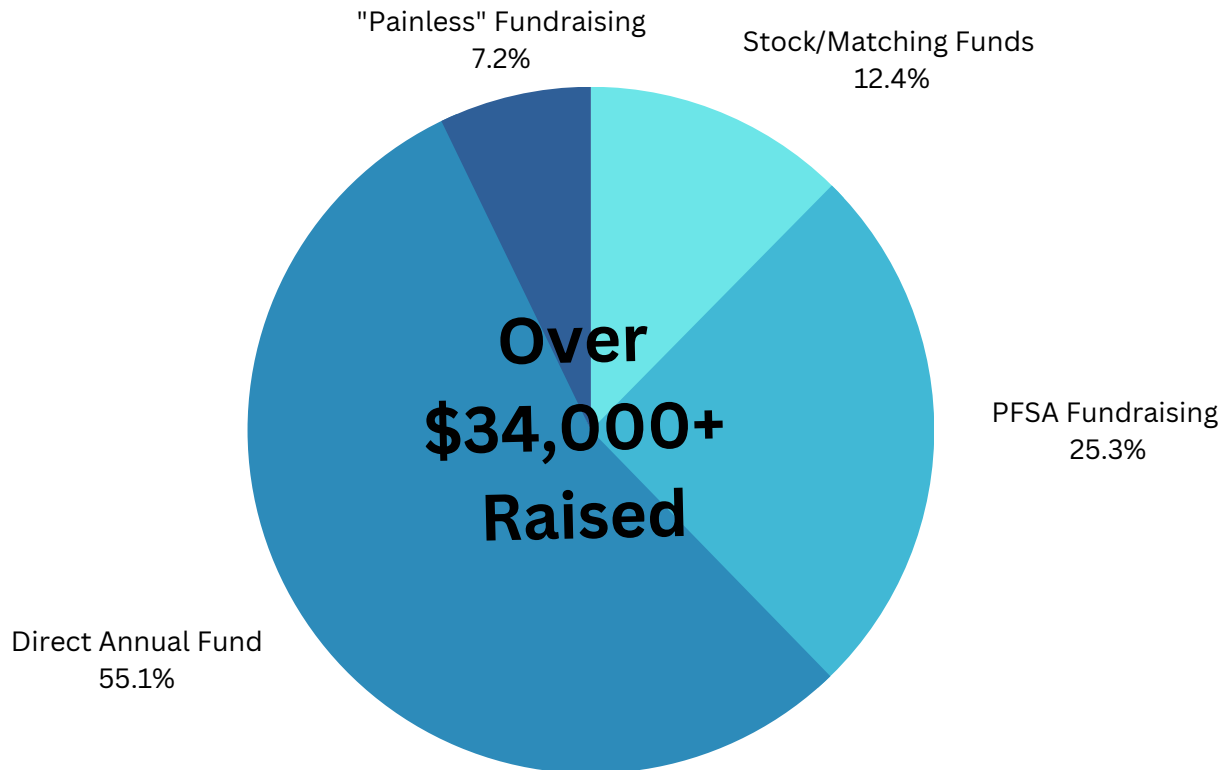


2022/23 Sterling Expenses (\$8.8M)



ANNUAL FUND & A CULTURE OF GIVING

We practiced a Culture of Giving with 100% of our LHU Board, 100% of our Admin Team, 96% of our Staff, and 32% of our parent community raising over \$34,000 dollars to support not just community PFSA events, such as Movie Nights, Holiday Treat Exchange, Teacher Appreciation Week, International Festival, Garden Day, and Spirit Wear, but also professional development for our Staff, and investment towards future plans. The Annual Fund is the foundation for development and improvements for Sterling.



Donor Participation

LHU Board	100%
Sterling Administration	100%
Sterling Staff	96%
Parent Community	32%

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CELEBRATING OUR GENEROUS ANNUAL FUND PATRONS

We genuinely thank every donor on this list for their contribution to the future of the school. This list of generosity combines those giving to our Annual Fund, donations to specific programs, such as Music or the LHU Scholarship, and fundraising events, such as the PFSA Charleston Wrap. Since the Annual Fund was created in 2020, the number of donors has **increased threefold**. But we still have work to do! A giving level of participation close to **100%** is crucial for us to ask corporate sponsors to join with us in **Capital Campaigns**; corporations want to know that the stakeholders are committed. **Every dollar amount counts** (no matter the amount) as we encourage our families to contribute.

PLATINUM PATRONS (\$1000+)

Anonymous	Jennifer & Randy Jewett	Praveena Tiwari and Pavan Pemmaraju
Maureen Capillo & Brett Kempler	Ryan and Jennifer Hill	Robert & Leslie Wolfe
	Anne Thompson	

DIAMOND PATRONS (\$500 - \$999)

Anonymous	Lauren and Kevin Herlihy	Ilin and Teofil Misaras
Khaula Baloch and Rafiq Shahid	Alison & Brian Hicks	Jayshree and Dhinesh Sadhwani
Lina Heinke & Yohelvin Ortiz	Imnaz and Mahmudul Jilani	

EMERALD PATRONS (\$100 - \$499)

Anonymous	Laxmikanth Collapelly	Natalia and Jason Olson
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Sonia Di Franco	Poonam Patel	

CELEBRATING OUR GENEROUS ANNUAL FUND PATRONS

RUBY PATRONS (UP TO \$49)

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Anonymous	Rachael Gaunce	Ryan Nesbitt
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Ghulshan Chowdury	Veramani	Lata Shetty
Naomi Chowdury	Michelle Ky	Anu Singh
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Nina Davis	Sridhar	Selena Swayngim
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Stephanie Deming	Vishalkumar A Maru	Joshua Tripp
Madeline Denton	Fay Masterson	Venkateswarulu Vadla
Gabriele J DePriest	Britiney McMillan	Lili Villafuerte
Candice DeVito	Jennifer McMurray	Sudha Vissamraju and Rupesh Avula
Dipti Dhungel	Praveen Mehta	Jennifer and Richard Vivolo
Ayomi Dissanayake	Deborah Mitchell	Jessica and Thomas Weiser
Patricia & Kim Dover	Puja and Brian Mitchell	Rhonda Williamson
Joela D'Souza	Uthamisree Muthiah and Suresh	Kimberly and Stephen Wright
Emberly & P Jeremy Dumayas	Ganapathy	Sue Ann Wright
Talyn Edwards	Vineeksha and Pranay Muthineni	Vijay Yerubandi
		Muyao Zhou



Consider donating today!

The Annual Fund Treasure Chest ensures the ability for Sterling to continue its growth in providing Montessori education. The generosity of donors to the Fund today and going forward provide a foundation for our goals in growth and enriching experiences for our students, faculty, staff and families.

We sincerely thank all our donors!

As we continue our development efforts we celebrate the partnerships with our local businesses and foundations that support of educational goals and vision of Sterling.

LOCAL BUSINESS DONATIONS & PARTNERSHIPS

<u>Academy of Kalari Adimural</u>	<u>HumSub</u>
<u>Batala Durham</u>	<u>Kim's Taekwondo</u>
<u>Best Brains</u>	<u>Master Chang's Martial Arts</u>
<u>Carolina Tamil Kalakkoodam</u>	<u>Patel Brothers</u>
<u>Chandi's Spa & Salon</u>	<u>Taiwanese Cultural Club of Raleigh</u>
<u>Chinese Language School & FASCA - Raleigh</u>	<u>Triggle Academy of Irish Dance</u>
<u>The City of Morrisville</u>	<u>Triangle Taiko</u>
<u>Disha Yoga</u>	<u>We Plant it Forward</u>

Thank you to all our community for your participation and donations!

For all the ways you can give, or to give today, please visit
sterlingmontessori.org/annual-fund.



Checks may be made payable to:
Sterling Montessori Academy & Charter School
202 Treybrooke Dr.,
Morrisville, NC 27560

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2023/24

This academic year, we revisited our options to enhance our outdoor learning environments, partly out of necessity with updating our structures, but also to bring outdoor Montessori environments to our students. Purposeful (outdoor) play is paramount to a Montessori education, and we recognize Sterling has some areas in need of improvement. We have begun consultation with the Natural Learning Initiative to create a Master Outdoor Plan.

"The land is where our roots are. The children must be taught to feel and live in harmony with the Earth."
– Dr. Maria Montessori.

This will be a **huge, multi-year endeavor**, requiring collaboration and cooperation from all our stakeholders, as well as corporate donations. More information will be forthcoming in the 2023/24 school year. We hope you will continue your generosity and support this important endeavor.

