

LHU Board of Directors Regular Meeting

February 19, 2025 6:30 PM
Sterling Montessori Academy and Charter School
202 Treybrooke Drive, Morrisville, NC 27560
Virtual via Google Meet

1. COMMENCEMENT

Call to Order and Board Attendance w/Determination of Quorum
At 6:35pm

Quorum Present with following Board Members in Attendance:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Present</u>		<u>Name</u>	<u>Present</u>		<u>Name</u>	<u>Present</u>
Rachel Richardson	x		Dwayne Jones	x		Daphne Coulter	x
Kevin Hughes	x		Keisha Pressley	x		Andrea Williams	
Jessi Fasola	x		Elizabeth Uzzell				
Ryan Hill	x		Susan English				

Reading of Mission Statement:

"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."

Conflict of Interest Statement

"At this time, we ask all board members to make a statement to be recorded in the minutes should they know of any conflict of interest or appearance of conflict with respect to any matters coming before them during this meeting. It is the duty of each board member to abstain from discussion and voting on such matters."



Native Land Acknowledgement

"The LHU Board recognizes that 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, but especially Black and indigenous students of color."

Agenda Items:

Including any related consent agenda items or discussion items added to agenda prior to consent vote.

Consent Agenda:

- Approval of January 15th, 2025 regular board meeting minutes

Discussion Items:

- Development to discuss NLI Master Plan Phase II decision

Closed Session:

- Personnel discussions per NCGS.

Approval of Agenda

At 6:38p, Rachel Richardson moved to approve the agenda. Approved

Name	Aye	Nay	Abs		Name	Aye	Nay	Abs		Name	Aye	Nay	Abs
Rachel Ri...	M				Dwayne Jones	x				Daphne Coulter	x		
Kevin Hughes	x				Keisha Pressley	x				Andrea Williams			
Jessi Fasola	x				Elizabeth Uzzell								
Ryan Hill	x				Susan English								



2. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

Please hold community comments until the end of ALL presentations. Board members may ask clarifying questions at this time of the presenter. Any board member may move to refer further discussion or other action back to the committee, with a vote.

Official Welcome of Fay Masterson as our New Executive Director.

Executive Director's Report – Fay Masterson

- Fay Masterson reviewed the highlights of the report.
- Ryan Hill asked a question that clarified the refurbished chromebooks was a recommendation by Netsmart that helped save us a significant amount.

Communications Committee Report - Ryan Hill

- No report. Surveys are ready to send out and will coordinate with Fay on the best time to send those out.

Finance Committee Report - Jessi Fasola

- Jessi Fasola reviewed highlights of the report.
- Keisha Pressley question, was there a promissory note signed for the money owed back? Jessi clarified that these individuals were paid before beginning work and never started.

DEI Committee Report - Dwayne Jones

- Monthly report provided.
- Dwayne provided overview of the highlights and the decision to sunset the board level committee as the work for the board level and handing off to Fay Masterson and school operations.
- Justin Tosco will update the 1-3-5 year plan and figure out the updated information for the website.
- Clarification of the consultant work received to the board, the intent of that work and who will be involved.
 - Rachel clarified that the consultant work is to help us understand a SWOT analysis of inclusion fork as it aligns with AMS accreditation requirements.



- Fay asked a clarifying question on Dwayne and Kim's recommendation for Justin to be the best person to update the 1-3-5 year plan.

Policy Committee Report - Kevin Hughes

- Kevin Hughes gave highlights of the report.
- Fay clarified that our SB49 policy documents posted are current and compliant.
- Fay is working on guidance for the Parent Advisory Council consideration for all of the ways that parents can provide feedback and be informed.
- Fay is well connected with school counsel for ongoing immigration guidance.

Development Committee Report – Keisha Pressley

- Keisha Pressley gave highlight of the report
- Kevin asked for clarification on the development account.
- Kevin asked about Fay's priorities for outdoor learning. Fay provided high level attention for the playground situation. There has been a long wait for enhancements.

Governance Committee - Keisha Pressley

- Keisha Pressley gave highlights of the report.
- Board self evals in the next several months.

Strategic Planning Committee Report - Ryan Hill

- Met combined with Development
- Making minor edits to Strategic Planning document
-

Community Comments (3 minute time limit)

Members of the public are now invited to provide comments on issues or concerns related to the school. To indicate your interest in speaking, please raise your hand. The Board Secretary will record names of speakers with a brief summary of comments. The board will not directly respond to any comments during this time. Please provide contact information to president@lhuf.org to allow for follow-up by the appropriate officer or committee chair. Formal comments may be emailed to president@lhuf.org ahead of any regular meeting to be considered for agenda/discussion.

Speakers are welcome to offer comments or criticism directed at substantive ideas, actions, or procedures of the school and LHU Board. In the interest of maintaining civility and decorum, however, speakers are encouraged to refrain from criticism or personal attacks directed at specific members of the Board, school staff, or members of the community.

The laws and policies of North Carolina provide that issues or concerns involving individual personnel matters are confidential, and, therefore, not appropriate for public comment settings. Concerns related to personnel issues may be addressed through appropriate school leadership, the Sterling grievance policy, or other applicable policies.

Speakers may discuss issues and matters of general concern but must refrain from discussing confidential student information. Concerns related to confidential student matters may be addressed through school leadership, the grievance policy or other applicable policies.

Comments:

- No Community Comments
-

3. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

Consent agenda items are non-controversial items unanimously recommended for approval by all involved parties and have already been reviewed by the board and Executive Director. Any board members or the Executive Director may request to pull items off the consent agenda.

Approval of Consent Agenda Items.

- Approval of January 15, 2025 Regular Board Meeting Minutes



At 7:46p Rachel Richardson moved to approve Consent Agenda Items. Approved.

Name	Aye	Nay	Abs		Name	Aye	Nay	Abs		Name	Aye	Nay	Abs
Rachel Ri...	M				Dwayne Jones	x				Daphne Coulter	x		
Kevin Hughes	x				Keisha Pressley	x				Andrea Williams	x		
Jessi Fasola	x				Elizabeth Uzzell								
Ryan Hill	x				Susan English	x							

4. DISCUSSION ITEMS

- Development to discuss NLI Master Plan Phase II decision
 - Ryan Hill gave some initial
 - Clarifying discussion on what is all involved in phase II.
 - Lora Greco community member provided expertise in the area of landscape architect.
 - Game time playground equipment and other manufacturers do provide grants.
 - Fay gave a recommendation to look at the NLI feedback documents to consider for the immediate needs.
 - Next actions, back to committee to confirm the teachers desires from the NLI conversations. Development and Strategic Planning will come back with recommendations.
- Update to the 2025 Inclement Weather Days
 - If we have to close on Friday, we'll have to make up hours for 2/21, make it up on a teacher workday or other option as outlined in the enclosed spreadsheet.



5. APPROVAL OF CONSENT ITEM

Consent Item – Approval of Personal Leave Payout Increase

At 8:35pm, Rachel Richardson moved to approve an increase in Personal Leave payout at year end from \$50/day to \$100/day. Approved.

Name	Aye	Nay	Abs		Name	Aye	Nay	Abs		Name	Aye	Nay	Abs
Rachel Ri...	M				Dwayne Jones	x				Daphne Coulter	x		
Kevin Hughes	x				Keisha Pressley	x				Andrea Williams	x		
Jessi Fasola	x				Elizabeth Uzzell								
Ryan Hill	x				Susan English	x							

Consent Item – Approval of retirement contribution Match

At 8:36pm, Rachel Richardson moved to approve the increase in retirement plan contribution for employee match from 3% to 4%. Approved.

Name	Aye	Nay	Abs		Name	Aye	Nay	Abs		Name	Aye	Nay	Abs
Rachel Ri...	M				Dwayne Jones	x				Daphne Coulter	x		
Kevin Hughes	x				Keisha Pressley	x				Andrea Williams	x		
Jessi Fasola	x				Elizabeth Uzzell								
Ryan Hill	x				Susan English	x							

Consent Item – Approval of Reducing the Promissory payback period

At 8:38pm, Rachel Richardson moved to reduce the promissory payback period as outlined in the finance committee report. Approved.



Name	Aye	Nay	Abs		Name	Aye	Nay	Abs		Name	Aye	Nay	Abs
Rachel Ri...	M				Dwayne Jones	x				Daphne Coulter	x		
Kevin Hughes	x				Keisha Pressley	x				Andrea Williams	x		
Jessi Fasola	x				Elizabeth Uzzell								
Ryan Hill	x				Susan English	x							

Consent Item – Approve

At 8:39pm, Rachel Richardson moved to approve forgiving the payback owed back to Sterling as outlined and recommended in the Finance Committee Report. Approved.

Name	Aye	Nay	Abs		Name	Aye	Nay	Abs		Name	Aye	Nay	Abs
Rachel Ri...	M				Dwayne Jones	x				Daphne Coulter	x		
Kevin Hughes	x				Keisha Pressley	x				Andrea Williams	x		
Jessi Fasola	x				Elizabeth Uzzell								
Ryan Hill	x				Susan English	x							

6. Closed Session

Closed Session

At 8:43pm, Rachel Richardson moved to go into closed session to consider the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, conditions of appointment, or conditions of initial employment of a present or prospective public officer or employee [N.C.G.S. § 143-318.11(a)(6)].

Student confidentiality as outlined in statute.



Name	Aye	Nay	Abs		Name	Aye	Nay	Abs		Name	Aye	Nay	Abs
Rachel Ri...	x				Dwayne Jones	x				Daphne Coulter	x		
Kevin Hughes	x				Keisha Pressley	x				Andrea Williams	x		
Jessi Fasola	x				Elizabeth Uzzell								
Ryan Hill	M				Susan English	x							

Return to Open Session

At 9:33pm, Rachel Richardson moved to return to open session. No action taken.

Name	Aye	Nay	Abs		Name	Aye	Nay	Abs		Name	Aye	Nay	Abs
Rachel Ri...	M				Dwayne Jones	x				Daphne Coulter	x		
Kevin Hughes	x				Keisha Pressley	x				Andrea Williams	x		
Jessi Fasola	x				Elizabeth Uzzell								
Ryan Hill	x				Susan English	x							

8. ADJOURNMENT

At 9:33p, Rachel Richardson moved to adjourn. Approved

Name	Aye	Nay	Abs		Name	Aye	Nay	Abs		Name	Aye	Nay	Abs
Rachel Ri...	M				Dwayne Jones	x				Daphne Coulter	x		



Kevin Hughes	x				Keisha Pressley	x				Andrea Williams	x		
Jessi Fasola	x				Elizabeth Uzzell								
Ryan Hill	x				Susan English	x							

Attendance:

Full Name	First Seen	Time in Call
Amanda Harps	2/19/2025 18:36	1:59:03
Andrea Williams	2/19/2025 18:48	2:44:58
Carroll Krause	2/19/2025 18:30	2:12:55
Daphne Coulter	2/19/2025 18:31	3:01:48
Dwayne Jones	2/19/2025 18:33	3:00:00
Ellie Shameli	2/19/2025 18:31	1:15:39
Fay Masterson	2/19/2025 18:30	3:03:16
Jessi Fasola	2/19/2025 18:30	3:02:42
Keisha Pressley	2/19/2025 18:31	3:01:48
Kevin Hughes	2/19/2025 18:30	3:02:40
Kim Elliott	2/19/2025 18:31	2:22:45
Lan Zhu	2/19/2025 19:14	1:00:17
Lora Greco	2/19/2025 19:02	1:49:18
Rachel Richardson	2/19/2025 18:33	3:00:32
Robert Wolfe	2/19/2025 18:34	0:00:02



**STERLING
MONTESSORI**
EST. 1997

LAURA HOLLAND UZZELL FOUNDATION

A nonprofit organization

Ryan Hill

2/19/2025 18:31

3:02:03

Susan English

2/19/2025 18:40

2:53:35

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Meeting Report - February 11, 2024

Committee Actions:

For Board Approval:

- Forgive Amounts Owed to Sterling from Previous Employees = \$~19,000
- Increase PL payout at year end from \$50/day to \$100/day = \$12,000
- Increase retirement contribution match from 3% to 4% = \$22,000
- Promissory note language - Reducing the payback if employee leaves before 3 years instead of 5 years.
 - And changing current 5 year promissory notes to 3 years as well

Minutes from February 11, 2025 Meeting:

Attendance and Call To Order

(Virtual)

Chair: Jessi Fasola

Board Members: Kim Elliott (left early), Ryan Hill, Dwayne Jones

Others: Betty Warren, Fay Masterson, and Denise Kimball

Meeting was called to order at 12:02pm

- **10 Month Salary Change - Effective July 2026**
 - Initial memo to go out in March, JRF is drafting now
 - We will provide more details, meetings, resources in the Fall
 - They will receive a June 2026 paycheck, but not July 2026
 - We will discuss insurance premiums with them
- **Budget Review**
 - We are waiting on lists from Technology and Facilities and will be able to provide surplus budget for them to spend as we approach the end of the year
 - Fay, Betty and Jessi are working on a 2025-2026 Budget now with the Exec Committee
 - Enrollment estimated to be 587
 - Classroom size down to 28
 - Estimating Middle school (7th and 8th) at 95. If it's much less, we may have to go back to 29 or 30 in class
 - 15 applications for 7th grade and 7 for 8th grade as of 2/11/25
- **Amounts owed to Sterling from previous employees**
 - Betty would like us to forgive these payments based on some information come to light legally but we should be OK. (See after notes for her explanation.) However, still concerned about the reputation of Sterling by doing this.
 - Since not sent to collections yet, we plan to present to the board to forgive the ~\$19k dollars. This may continue to be an issue next year, but will fix itself in 26-27 with the 10 month salary being implemented.
 - Reimburse the one person who did pay to be fair if this is approved
- **Teacher Incentives to Approve**
 - Increase PL (Personal Leave) payout at year end from \$50/day to \$100/day = \$12,000
 - Increase retirement contribution match from 3% to 4% = \$22,000
 - Classroom size of 28 (see above under Budget)
- **Promissory Note Language**
 - Reduce down to the 3 years - was changed to 5 by Maureen.
- **Discussion on teacher licensure and hiring**

- Focus on hiring teachers with Montessori training, Bachelors, and then assist them with getting NC Licensure?
 - Will candidates be stronger with this change?
- Always want as many teachers licensed as possible so not in a situation where you are worried about meeting the requirements
 - Will require us to pay attention and focus on this; clear systems and accountability
- We will present to Policy Committee to see how this affects any policies in place

Closure and Next Steps:

Meeting was adjourned at 12:36pm ; Any follow-up actions noted above.

Next Meeting March 11, 2025 at 12:00pm

Notes on Repayment from Previous Employees

There are 10 former employees who owe Sterling money due to being overpaid upon termination. Sterling has notified them of the amount of which they owe, but only one has made a payment. Betty's colleague had a similar situation at another school and the school's lawyer said that requiring them to repay would be violating DOL laws. I have the NC G.S. code which says that the employee shall repay any salary received for days not worked, but this lawyer was very vocal about the issue. She said that DOL law states that an employee must be paid at least minimum wage for the number of days worked in a month. For example, an employee could term on the 20th of the month and receive no paycheck for the month because they have already been overpaid. The lawyer says they are required to be paid minimum wage. The total amount owed to Sterling by these employees is \$19k. Should Sterling consider forgiving these debts? Are we on shaky ground here? While I feel that what we are doing is correct, I'm not 100% sure since hearing from this lawyer. Also, these disgruntled employees can do a lot of damage to Sterlings reputation by telling others about what "Sterling has done to them". If we decide to forgive the debt, Sterling should send these people a letter explaining it. Also, the one person who made payment should be reimbursed. By the way, this problem should not exist after Sterling changes from a 12 month pay cycle to 10 months.

Governance Committee

Regular Monthly Meeting Report - February 2025

Committee Actions and Recommendations:

- Review open committee chair seats:
 - Development Chair
- Board Member Survey - Self Evaluation (allows for ongoing reflection and professional board development) important for AMS accreditation and this could support that area.

Minutes from February 4, 2025 Meeting:

Attendance and Call To Order

Virtual via Google Meet

Chair: Keisha Pressley

Board Members Present: None

Call to order at 12:00 pm


Recruiting / Succession planning

Current LHU Board Interest Matrix

- Thinking of board member renewals for 2025-2026
- Intentional recruitment to support the board/school

Board Calendar:

	Board	Committee	Executive Director
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Give feedback for ED goals progress-Vote/approve furniture budget-Review and Approve Employee Handbook?-Begin Planning for Employee Survey-Send ED past goals, ask for future goals and self Evaluation		<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Update teacher reviews-Develop preliminary ED goals

-  LHU Strategic Calendar

Meeting was adjourned at 12:15 pm



STERLING
MONTESSORI
EST. 1997

Executive Director LHU Board Report - February 2025

School News

- Well attended LE and CH Come see me work
- March 12th and 14th- Many LE/UE/MS teachers will be attending CPI training March 12th being the first part of de-escalation and March 14th will be the restraint portion
- In-Person Book Fair- a lot of positive energy around this event. The school community very happy that it was in-person
- Sterling Stars- came to each class to sing Valentine's Day songs to the classes
- The lottery application period was extended by one week-Closed on February 14th
- We are no longer accepting post-lottery applications

Exceptional Children

- Currently, 84 students with IEPs and 5 students in the initial referral process.
- Crisis Prevention and Intervention Training will be offered to staff on March 12th and March 14th. Shannon Kirk (EC Teacher) and Jeff Strobl (Behavior Support Specialist) are certified CPI Trainers and will facilitate the training.
- EC staff have completed the following coursework as part of the requirements for Indicator 10: Disproportionate Representation in Specific Disability Categories
 1. EC Process Eligibility: Intellectual Disability
 2. EC Process Eligibility: Emotional Disability
 3. EC Process Eligibility: Other Health Impaired

Children's House

- **ENROLLMENT/ADMISSIONS**
 - 77 k's
 - 123 preschool
 - We are starting our last Preschool student on Monday, March 3rd
 - Enrolling new 3 & 4 year olds for the 2025-2026 school year
 - Tours continue- good turnouts

- **CHILDCARE LICENSING/SANITATION**
 - 2nd Child Care and Sanitation visit will happen in March
- **Parent Engagement**
 - Have parents come to the classroom to present and read to the children on Black History/Valentine's Day topics
- **CLASSROOM STUDENT SUPPORT**
 - On-Going as needed
- **CLASSROOM TEACHER SUPPORT**
 - On-Going as needed
- **PARENT/GUARDIAN SUPPORT**
 - Fresh Perspectives continue
- **TRAINING/WORKSHOPS**
 - Neurodiversity training just wrapped up. Jess our consultant came to the classroom and observed each room and shared strategies to implement to help with classroom dynamics

Lower Elementary

- MOY iReady was completed on February 18th. All of our students were tested
- LE teachers will use iReady data to inform instruction.
- Parent Ed night was well attended on February 13th from 4pm-5pm.
- Several LE teachers and assistants will be receiving CPI training on March 12th and 14th. The others will receive their training during work week this summer.
- Staffing: Interviews for B2 assistant, recommended a candidate for hire.
- Black history month projects are happening. Lauren (LE director) will be a guest presenter in B8 on the history of North Carolina Central University.

Upper Elementary

Recent Events:

- MS Rise Up Night Virtual - great turnout.
- MOY I-Ready completed.
- Liz completed Positive Discipline Parent Trainer Certification.

Teacher Support:

- Observations/ evaluation process to be completed by March 7 by Liz

MTSS:

- Power Hour - Groupings made based on the degree of interventions needed. Each teacher is teaching a group and tracking data for them.

What's Upcoming:

- Visit by METTC faculty for Mike and A.J
- Student-Led Conferences in March
- UE Parent Education this week
- Health Education led by Poe Center in late March
- CPI training

Middle School & Testing

Middle School:


- All MS Students receive training - Protecting Our Students (Session Law 2023-128/HB142 and G.S. 115C-105.57(2a)).
- iReady Middle of Year Diagnostics completed for Reading and Math for all MS students
- Painting school rock
- Trimester #2 ending this week - Progress Reports sent February 28
- UE to MS Rise Up Information Session held virtually February 11
 - Two alumni students returned to share their experiences in MS
 - All UE staff attended
- Student Council planning "Fun Run" fundraiser at 4pm on March 20

Testing:

- Conducting ACCESS Testing for Multilingual Learners (ML) K-8 throughout the month of February
- WIDA Multilingual Learner (ML) Screening for new-to-Sterling students who list languages on their home surveys other than English

Specialists and Student Services:

Specials:

Specials:  The Specials Connection Jan. 10 ,  The Specials Connection Feb. 7

The Sterling Stars visited all the classrooms on Feb. 13 and sang songs to celebrate Valentines Day

The 4th graders will be going to the NC Symphony on Feb. 26

All teachers had an opportunity to observe CH classrooms in January and then we shared what was observed

All teachers will be observing LE classrooms this month

MTSS:

22 student in LE

21 students in UE

15 in MS

504 Students

25 students

27 going through the eligibility process

ML:

63 Students

ACCESS testing is taking place this month

I met with teachers to discuss ML plans and they were updated, some received new ML goals since they had mastered their goals that had been put in place in October

BTSP

2nd Mentee observation was done this month

Homebound Learning:

2 students in homebound learning, 1 student will return beginning of March

RtA Law: 12 3rd grade students passed the RtA Law through MOY iReady

Operations

Current School Enrollment - 2024-2025

Charter - 607

Academy - 123

Total Enrollment 730

-2	54
-1	69
0	77
1	84
2	83
3	73
4	70
5	65
6	47
7	48
8	60

As of March 3rd we will be full (last Academy student starts)

Post Lottery Applications for 24-25 school year since December: 6

Lottery closed on Friday, February 14, 2025

K-270 applications

1st- 50 applications

2nd- 60 applications

3rd- 39 applications

4th-43- applications

5th-19- applications

6th-42- applications

7th-18- applications

8th-9- applications

TOTAL- 550 lottery applications

Intent to Return 450 out of 546 (K-7) intent to return forms have been returned
96 families have not submitted their forms. Emails will be sent to non responsive families next week asking families to respond to the intent to return form.

Technology- 200 refurbished Chromebooks have been ordered to get ahead of the need during testing and to replace any broken chromebooks

Infinite Campus - Next meeting with representatives will be 2/26/25, Directors will join the meeting to ask any questions that they may have regarding the implementation of Infinite campus or documents that they may want to have added to this process.



Policy Committee

February 6, 2025 Meeting:

Attendance and Call to Order

Virtual via Google Meets

Chair: Kevin Hughes

Board Members: Dwayne Jones

Others: Fay Masterson, Denise Kimball, Cinwain Garner

The meeting was called to order at 12:00pm.

Agenda

- ED Priorities
- Possible future policy changes
- SB49 (Parents' Bill of Rights) implementation

Discussion Items:

ED Priorities

- Welcome to Fay as new ED. The Committee discussed that typically, policy changes are driven by (1) a change in the law that Sterling has to address or (2) EWD/director priorities.
- Fay stated that one of her primary focus areas now is admissions and enrollment.
- NC law allows charter schools to give priority to students who attend a preschool program offered by that charter. Fay believes that Sterling should consider this. Fay will have more thoughts on that at upcoming Board or Committee meetings.
- Fay also discussed immediate steps the school can take for enrollment next school year such as postcards to addresses in the area via USPS or attending school choice fairs.

Possible Future Policy Revisions or Needs

- Immigration Enforcement. Fay is awaiting guidance from Donna on how the school should respond to immigration enforcement activities on school property.



- The school may also want to look at addressing steps the school can take if student families are separated.

SB49 Implementation

- The Parents' Bill of Rights (SB49) addressed the formation of Parent Advisory Councils. The school already offers opportunities for parent involvement and contribution.
- Fay will discuss with Donna to ensure the school is following recommended practices for complying with all aspects of SB49.
- Fay will consider whether we want to formalize a parent council outside of the PFSA as a means for greater community growth.

March Meeting Agenda Items

Closure and Next Steps:

- Next meeting scheduled for March February 6 at 12:00

Recommended Board Action

- None

Meeting was adjourned at 12:51 pm.

To meet the **1,025-hour requirement**, Sterling's daily schedule is **6 hours of instruction per day** over a 180-day school year. However, since charter schools have flexibility in their calendars, they can adjust the number of days as long as they meet the total 1,025 instructional hours.

Date	Reason	Hours closed	Educational HRS
			1062
9-27-24	Hurricane Helena- (WC closed)	6	1056
1-10-25	Snow- Early Release @ 12	2.5	1053.5
1-22-25	Snow-closed (WC closed)	6	1047.5
1-23-25	Snow-closed (WC closed)	6	1041.5
1-24-25	Snow- 2 hr delay (WC 2hr delay)	1	1040.5
2-19-25	Snow closed (WC closed)	6	1034.5
2-20-25	Snow closed	6	1028.5
2-21-25	Snow closed	6	1022.5
			1022.5
			1022.5
			1022.5
			1022.5

Snow make up days- February 14th, March 12th (work day), March 14th (work Day) June 13th (last day of school)

Minutes from February 5, 2025 Meeting:

Attendance and Call To Order

Virtual via Google Meets

Chair: Keisha Pressley

Board Members: Jessi Fasola, Andrea Williams, Ryan Hill

Sterling Staff: Stephanie Deming,

Parent Members: Katrina DiTomaso

Meeting was called to order at 12:00 pm.

Recap of progress since last meeting:

- Book Fair
 - Fun Run - Entry Fee instead of money raised per laps completed since it's 1.5
 - State of the School initial thoughts- March 20th (5:30pm - 7:00pm) expect to speak around 5:45 pm
 - Digital Invitation - to include an Agenda
 - Food? Refreshments - Ryan to see how much for a branded snacks (cookies)?
 - Stage
 - Tables
 - Chairs
 - Location: Sport Court
 - QR codes to the Strategic Plan to pass out?
 - Potential Agenda items to include:
 - Hear from Fay
 - Hear from Rachel
- Strategic Plan
 - Ryan printed Prototype
 - Consider have 100 printed for marketing
 - Ryan to check with Jessi on budget to see cost for full bleed.
 - ~\$1,400

Giving Stats for 2024/25 (as of 2/5/25)

- Board 75%
 - Admin 36%
 - Staff 29%
 - Community 24%
-
- Balance of Development Account: \$107,987+

Book Fair - in progress at time of meeting, will have total collected at board meeting.

 - **Balance of Development Acct = ~\$96,000 +**

\$ 7,151.77	\$ 1,525.00	\$ 11,588.55	\$ 4,753.61	\$ 8,589.81	\$ 579.63	\$ -	\$ -	\$ (455.00)	\$ -	\$ (1,394.26)	\$ -	\$ (3,514.52)	\$ (4,998.00)
						\$ 34,188.37							\$ (10,361.78)
20.92%	4.46%	33.90%	13.90%	25.12%	1.70%		0.00%	4.39%		13.46%		33.92%	48.23%
Stock/ Matching Donations	Personal Check - Annual Fund Donations	Stripe	Paypal	PFSA Fundrai sing	Interest	Cash	Large Proje ct/ Other	Sponso rships	Capita l Impro veme nts	Admin/ Developm ent	Educati on	PFSA	Donation to External Non-profit

Open Topics:

- **NCState - Natural Learning Initiative Phase II**

Latest visual to be presented at “State of School” (Tentatively planned for March 20th??)

“PHASE 2 – SCHEMATIC DESIGN of OUTDOOR PLAY AND LEARNING SPACES, SETTINGS, AND PATHWAYS Project Tasks (Phase 2 Scope and budget to be confirmed following Phase 1 Master Plan)

1. Online teacher workshops. NLI will facilitate teacher workshops, working with each age group separately, to further refine and produce initial layouts of OPALS identified in the master plan phase.

Outcome: List of desired play and learning settings, initial layouts of OPALS.

2. Draft schematic design. Based on results of the master plan and teacher workshops, NLI will develop a draft schematic layout of the OPALS for review by the project team.

Deliverable: Draft hand-drawn schematic layout.

3. Online review(s). NLI will conduct an online review of the draft schematic layout and modify the design accordingly. If needed, a second online review and round of revisions will occur.

Deliverable: Revised schematic layout (hand-drawn).

4. Final schematic design. NLI will prepare the final OPALS schematic design AutoCAD drawings.

Deliverable: Final play and learning areas schematic design in AutoCAD.

5. Schematic design display poster(s). NLI will prepare full-color poster(s) with the schematic design.

Deliverable: Design poster(s).

Next Steps:

- Add the State of the School to the Calendar - (completed)
- Decide on the next full board meeting - - How do we want to do phase 2?
 - Where are our priorities
 - Do we need a landscape designer next?
 - What can we commit to moving to as the next item?

Meeting was adjourned at 12:39 pm



DEI Committee

Regular Monthly Meeting Report - February 2025

DEI Mission: Sterling Montessori values diversity, prioritizes equity, and commits to being an inclusive school community which is critical to meeting our Montessori mission and affirming the full humanity of all community members. ([Our DEI Pledge](#))

Minutes from January 13th, Meeting:

Attendance and Call To Order

Virtual via Google Meet

Chair: Dwayne Jones

Board Members Present: Keisha Pressley

Others: Justin Tosco

Meeting was called to order at 4:05 pm

Transition of the Committee & Integration into School Leadership

Sterling has sunset the committee to allow for the administrative and instructional teams to take full ownership of embedding DEIB principles into daily operations. This shift ensures that diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging are not siloed efforts but core components of Sterling's educational and leadership practices.

As Maria Montessori once stated, "The greatest sign of success for a teacher is to be able to say, 'The children are now working as if I did not exist.'" Likewise, this transition signifies progress—where inclusion is no longer an initiative but simply the way we operate.

1-3-5 Year Plan: A Framework for Continued Growth

Though work at the board-level committee has ended, the 1-3-5 Year Plan remains a critical guiding document for leadership. This framework serves as a reference point for Sterling's



ongoing efforts, ensuring that inclusive practices, professional development, and strategic planning remain aligned with the school's long-term vision.

AMS Accreditation Work

A new proposal from Maati Wafford is in development to support leadership coaching, professional development, and accreditation work. This partnership aligns with our five-year strategic plan and will help us meet AMS accreditation standards.

Defining & Measuring Belonging

The addition of "Belonging" to DEI efforts is a significant step forward. At our last meeting, our intention was to define what belonging means for students, parents, and staff.

- Survey comments should guide the definition of belonging to ensure it resonates with the entire school community.
- Moving forward, belonging will be measured through qualitative and quantitative data, tracking trends over time to assess progress.
- Belonging encompasses diverse experiences—from students with disabilities to underrepresented groups—ensuring all families see themselves in this work.
- Emotional and psychological safety are key aspects of belonging. As Keisha Pressley noted, "Belonging is about safety, security, and the human element."

Final Thought

Inclusive practices are deeply rooted in Montessori philosophy, which emphasizes respect for the individual, prepared environments that meet diverse needs, and fostering a sense of belonging for all learners. At Sterling, these principles naturally align with the AMS accreditation standards, ensuring that equity and inclusion are not just ideals but integrated into our school's framework. As we transition our efforts into daily operations, we recognize that creating an inclusive, student-centered environment is ongoing work—one that reflects both Montessorian philosophy and national accreditation standards.

Meeting was adjourned at 5:00pm.

October 26, 2023

Sterling Montessori Academy and Charter School, Morrisville, NC

Phase One Outdoor Play and Learning Environment Design Program and Campus Master Plan

PROJECT GOAL

Sterling Montessori Academy and Charter School (SMACS) proposes to engage in a collaborative planning and design process with the Natural Learning Initiative (NLI) to renovate the campus outdoor play and learning spaces (OPALS) to become better grounded in the Montessori philosophy, aligning with the mission and vision of SMACS. Drawing from NLI's 2000 campus master plan, NLI will assist with creating an updated campus master plan that creates a high-quality environment to support the play and learning needs of the school, fostering curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking in its students. Following the design programming and master plan phase, NLI will lead a Phase Two schematic design (not included in the Phase One contract) for the implementation of priority OPALS established by the design program and master plan.

PHASE ONE – CAMPUS MASTER PLAN

Project Tasks

1. Preparation. NLI staff will participate in a telephone/Zoom conference call with SMACS staff to review the scope of work and confirm schedule.

2. Coordination with SMACS staff and project consultants. NLI will collaborate online with the SMACS staff and project consultants to acquire available site analysis and base data, including information about existing conditions, adjacent uses, and consider implications for site improvements being planned.

Outcome: Inventory of existing conditions.

3. Base plan preparation. Using a site survey drawing including all existing site features (property boundaries, building footprints with door and window locations, sidewalks, parking lots, fence lines, play features, trees, shrubs, utilities, equipment, drains, shade structures, and topography represented in one-foot contours) provided by SMACS, NLI will create a base plan of the project site.

Outcome: Scaled base plan.

4. Meeting with Directors. NLI will meet in-person with Directors prior to distribution of the community survey to discuss and answer questions related to the design process and community survey.

Activity: In-person meeting with Directors.

5. Stakeholder presentation. NLI will deliver an in-person presentation to project stakeholders including the SMACS Board, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders to discuss the design process, show relevant precedent projects illustrating high quality play and learning environments, and answer questions.

Activity: In-person presentation.

6. Student engagement. NLI will transmit guidelines to the teaching staff describing methods for engaging students in the landscape design process, with directions for documentation and transmittal of results to NLI for integration into the design program and master plan.

Outcome: Engagement results to inform the master plan.

7. Community survey. NLI will prepare in collaboration with SMACS staff a survey to elicit the opinions of the school community (students, teachers, administrators, Board, and other relevant stakeholders), concerning suggested outdoor play and learning settings and related improvements as input into the design program. A draft of the survey will be shared with the project team for feedback prior to distribution. Results will be analyzed and a report published.

Deliverable: Community survey report.

8. Site analysis. NLI will identify and analyze physical site assets, opportunities, and constraints; share and discuss results with SMACS leadership and other design team members via online meetings; and highlight site issues requiring priority attention.

Deliverable: Site analysis to inform site diagram.

9. Project goals and objectives workshop. NLI will hold an in-person workshop with SMACS leadership including Directors to review results of the community survey, define goals, objectives, and prioritize settings to inform the design program and site development aligned with the mission and vision of SMACS. Site potentials will be assessed that support goals and objectives. Those not supported will be discussed and remedies proposed.

Deliverable: Statement of goals, objectives and commentary.

10. Draft site diagram. Based on results of 6. through 9. above, NLI will develop a draft site diagram illustrating site opportunities for further development including possible revisions to circulation, activity areas, and settings, to be reviewed during the site visit and grade level workshops.

Deliverable: Draft site diagram.

11. Site visit. NLI will conduct a site visit to tour the site with administrators, confirm site measurements, and gather additional site data, including photographs. The draft site diagram will be reviewed on site and revisions made as needed.

Outcome: Revised site diagram.

12. Grade level workshops. NLI will conduct 4 in-person workshops with Children's House, Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary, and Middle School (Specials and EC to join a session) to discuss the results of the community survey and student engagement, review the draft site diagram, revise as needed, and discuss top priority areas and settings to be included in the design program and campus master plan (and later incorporation in the Phase Two schematic design).

Outcome: Revised site diagram. List of priority play and learning settings to be included in schematic design.

13. Draft campus master plan. Based on the grade level workshops, NLI will further develop the draft campus master plan, including annotations, graphics, and an accompanying design program (will inform the Phase Two schematic design).

Deliverable: Draft campus master plan.

14. Online review. NLI will conduct an online review with relevant stakeholders to finalize the campus master plan.

Deliverable: Semi-final campus master plan.

15. Final campus master plan and design program. NLI will prepare and transmit the final campus master plan and design program based on feedback from the online review.

Deliverable: Final campus master plan and design program.

16. Supplemental fundraising and communication resources. NLI will create visual resources for fundraising, social media, communication, and grant submittal purposes as needed by SMACS and will present the campus master plan in-person to the Sterling community if desired.

Deliverable: Supplemental resources and campus master plan presentation.

17. Design transfer. NLI will transmit the campus master plan and design program to licensed professionals for permitting purposes if necessary and will provide assistance and support for the permitting process.

18. Advisory. NLI will continue to be available to advise the project team on matters related to the campus master plan during the permitting process.

COST OF SERVICES – CAMPUS MASTER PLAN PHASE ONE (NOTE: After client review, the revised budget will be reviewed by the College of Design Research Office and is subject to slight revision.)

Costs covered by this agreement include NLI staff time, NC State University student assistance, fringe benefit costs associated with university employees, use of university space and equipment, university indirect cost reimbursement (33.6%), supplies, and travel expenses. Costs reflect current University rates and are subject to change by the University prior to contract execution. Sponsor will be notified of any rate changes prior to execution. Addendums to the contract can be added at a later date for additional time and services required past those outlined in the scope of work.

PI (Faculty) and Staff time, including graduate student assistance	\$
Fringe Benefit Costs	\$
Supplies	\$
Travel	\$
NC State University indirect cost requirement 33.6%	\$
TOTAL	\$

January 21, 2025

PHASE 2 – SCHEMATIC DESIGN of OUTDOOR PLAY AND LEARNING SPACES, SETTINGS, AND PATHWAYS
Project Tasks (Phase 2 Scope and budget to be confirmed following Phase 1 Master Plan)

1. Online teacher workshops. NLI will facilitate teacher workshops, working with each age group separately, to further refine and produce initial layouts of OPALS identified in the master plan phase.

Outcome: List of desired play and learning settings, initial layouts of OPALS.

2. Draft schematic design. Based on results of the master plan and teacher workshops, NLI will develop a draft schematic layout of the OPALS for review by the project team.

Deliverable: Draft hand-drawn schematic layout.

3. Online review(s). NLI will conduct an online review of the draft schematic layout and modify the design accordingly. If needed, a second online review and round of revisions will occur.

Deliverable: Revised schematic layout (hand-drawn).

4. Final schematic design. NLI will prepare the final OPALS schematic design AutoCAD drawings.

Deliverable: Final play and learning areas schematic design in AutoCAD.

5. Schematic design display poster(s). NLI will prepare full-color poster(s) with the schematic design.

Deliverable: Design poster(s).

6. Design transfer/construction document review. NLI will transmit the final schematic design to licensed design professionals for construction documentation and permitting submittals. NLI will advise on contractor selection, review construction documents, shop drawings, implementation schedule, and provide guidance on equipment and material selection, with reference to the design program and additional photographic examples as required.

Outcome: Schematic design integrated into construction documents/permit drawings.

7. Implementation guidance. NLI will continue to collaborate with SMACS design team to provide necessary information, respond to construction queries, review shop drawings, and provide general guidance.

Outcome: Installed play and learning areas.

8. Advisory. NLI will continue to be available to advise the project team on matters related to the schematic design during the permitting and construction process.

COST OF SERVICES– SCHEMATIC DESIGN PHASE (to be confirmed at completion of Master Plan Phase)