



Monteverde Friends School/Escuela de los Amigos

August 2021

www.mfschool.org

Welcoming Students and Teachers for the 2021-22 School Year



Our kindergarten teacher comforts a new student on his first day.

Our handful of administrative staff worked over the summer on a very quiet campus, usually with just 4 or 5 people around. In July and August, we began welcoming academic staff back. First, new Head of School, Liza Ewan joined us in mid-July. Then, Maggie Fatovic, our Sub-Director for Academics, returned from the US a couple of weeks later. By early August, several new teachers began to arrive, joining our ongoing teachers.

With delight, we started to feel the campus coming to life again. Schedules and classroom assignments were reviewed for continued hybrid classes, emphasizing an expansion of in-person teaching time. Adjustments were made based on our experience last semester.

Parents were polled to see whether they wanted their children attending school in person or virtually. To our amazement, only 2 students out of the whole school opted to stay with virtual classes.

When there was a last-minute hiccup when, 6 days before school was to open, the Ministry of Education announced that students could be just 1 meter (3 feet) apart in classrooms, though most other distancing and hygiene protocols continue. This is a much appreciated step back to pre-pandemic normal -- but it also required a total revamping of schedules and classroom configurations.

The start of school was pushed back by two days for these adjustments, but on August 18th we greeted all of our students with great joy.

We invite you to read on and meet the extraordinary group of new teachers who have joined us this year.

Meet Our New Teachers

All organizations seem to go through cycles. Sometimes there is a period where there is little turnover. Then seemingly for no reason, suddenly several people leave and have to be replaced.

We have a little bit more explanation in our case. MFS has had little turnover for several years. Then the pandemic delayed some people who were thinking of moving. There are a variety of reasons for leaving -- needing to be closer to family members who face illnesses, just being closer to family, or for international teachers, completing their 2-year commitment to MFS.

After a lot of recruiting over the last 6 months, we are delighted with the new teachers who are joining us. We hope you enjoy "meeting" them here as much as we have!



Anastasia Shown, who teaches the high school Humanities/Social Studies course, has spent the last twenty years working in global education and diversity, equity and inclusion. She is passionate about exposing students to global histories, cultures, experiences, and beliefs, and focusing on people and perspectives that are less commonly studied.

She completed her Bachelor's degree at Indiana University and the University of Ghana, majoring in Women's Studies. She earned her Master's of Social Work degree at the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Policy & Practice. Prior to working at MFS, Anastasia led study abroad courses for students and educators in Ghana, Cameroon, and Ethiopia, worked as a lecturer and Assistant Director of African Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, and consulted for schools and organizations on education and social justice projects.

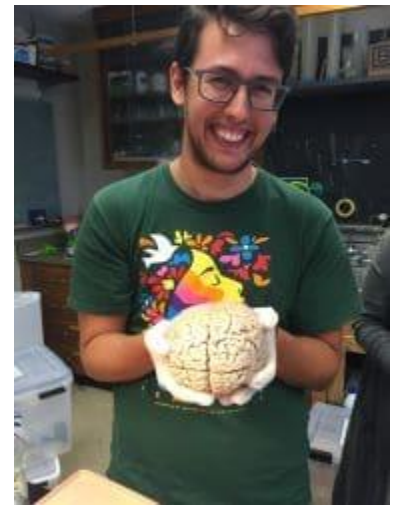
She is slowly learning Spanish and enjoying exploring Costa Rica with her husband and two children.

Lewis Stellar joins us as our high school science teacher. He spent the last 10 years learning and laughing with students in the science classroom in Seattle, Washington. His work with grades 6-12 centers on the intersections of scientific inquiry, social justice, and play.

Lewis earned his M.S. in Science Education from Montana State University in 2018, where his research focused on creating spaces that are welcoming to all students and invite them to bring their full selves into the science classroom.

He is also a founding member of the Gender-Inclusive Biology project and has worked on equity-focused curriculum design for National Geographic, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center.

Outside of work, Lewis loves to quilt, go birdwatching, ride bicycles, practice his Spanish, and try out new fermentation projects.



Sirleny Pérez Artavia, who grew up in Monteverde, is our new primary Spanish and Social Studies teacher.

She studied Education Sciences in Cycle I and II at the National Distance State University. She has nineteen years of experience teaching high school and grades one through seven. She likes the interaction with the students, teaching and learning from the children. It is her passion since students always have something new to teach her. She faithfully believes in teaching through projects where the student is the protagonist of their own learning.

Sirleny enjoys spending time with her family, hiking in the woods, and reading a good book along with a cup of coffee. She has two children, 31 and 13 years old.

Guadalupe Vargas, our new high school Spanish literature teacher, is from Turrialba, Costa Rica. She is a Spanish teacher who earned her teaching degree from the University of Costa Rica (UCR), where she continues her studies toward a Bachelor's of Non-Formal Education Administration.

Her work experience includes working on developing publishing projects with the UCR Student Publishing House. She is passionate about poetry and her writing, with which she has participated in the International Arts Festival and the International Book Fair.

She loves dogs and teaching in Monteverde. She firmly believes that education and empowerment of different female voices can change the world.



Lacey Boland, our new high school English teacher, is from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania where she has spent the last ten years teaching English to 7th and 8th grade students. Prior to her work in public charter, progressive, and Quaker school classrooms, Lacey worked as a wilderness instructor and outdoor educator for programs such as Outward Bound and Teen Adventure through the Baltimore Yearly Meeting Camping Program. Other teaching experiences include teaching English to elementary students in Xela, Guatemala and at a university in Qingdao, China.

Lacey received her M.A. in English Education from Columbia University Teachers College, and earned her B.A. in English with a minor in Spanish from Earlham College.

Lacey, her husband, Ethan, and their children Jude (8) and Solomon (5), are thrilled to join the MFS community! Lacey loves spending time outdoors with her family: canoeing, hiking, and camping.

Lauren Snyder joins us as our new Student Support (Special Ed) teacher. After graduating from the University of Maryland in 2004, she embarked on a career in schools and out-of-school time programs throughout Maryland and Virginia.

She earned her Master's degree in the Art of Teaching in 2011. Most recently, Lauren lived in Baltimore, Maryland where she learned restorative methods and community building practices that inform her relationships with students.

Lauren is very excited to be a part of the MFS community and to learn more about the students and their families. In her downtime, Lauren enjoys reading, dancing, playing video games, and riding her bike.





Coral Peral will work with all grade levels to provide art classes. She grew up in Spain, but has lived in the UK, US, Brazil and, since 2018, in Monteverde.

Here she has developed and shared her love for the arts and the community, working as an art teacher and collaborating with local art projects. She is grateful and excited to continue doing so at MFS! Coral double majored in Visual Arts and Psychology at St. Lawrence University and later earned her Master's degree in Neuropsychology and Education from Universidad Internacional de La Rioja, where she focused on emotional intelligence, creativity and the impact of the arts on our cognitive development.

She has worked as an International Baccalaureate Visual Arts tutor, a curator at international art fairs and a climbing and kayaking instructor. Coral enjoys painting, reading and listening to music, especially if it is outside and in the company of family and friends.



As COVID infection rates remain stubbornly high here in Costa Rica, our Monteverde economy is only very slowly recovering and our parents continue to struggle to pay tuition.

Your donations for scholarships make a huge difference.

No matter how small or large the monetary value of your donation, we deeply appreciate your support

