

HEAD OF SCHOOL SEARCH

MONTESSORI SCHOOL OF LOUISVILLE

Louisville, Kentucky

msl-edu.org

Start Date: July 2026



**Carney
Sandoe**
& ASSOCIATES

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Mission Statement

To support children's innate love for learning in a diverse and nurturing community that integrates authentic Montessori philosophy with contemporary, research-based educational methods. Students of the Montessori School of Louisville are empowered to make knowledgeable, responsible, and peaceful contributions to the global community.

Overview

Montessori School of Louisville (MSL) turns 20 next year. Matching that milestone, the school is at an inflection point where a new head will launch the school into its next 20 years on a roll.

After a distinguished 10 year run as Head of School, Jennifer Cattell has announced that this will be her last year at the school, but what a launch pad for the next decade and the next head! Consider:

- The school is an exemplary model of excellent Montessori education where the students are the central focus and are thriving. They love their teachers and vice versa. The school is the only PK-8 AMS—Accredited Montessori school in its market area, a sign of approval of which the school community is justifiably proud.
- Due to a long-held culture of fiscal prudence, the school has a track record of balanced budgets and no debt.
- Because the school has expended minimal marketing efforts, there is optimism that with concerted outreach plans and more attention to retention at the “usual” elementary school transition points, the potential for growth among mission-appropriate students is substantial.
- Guided by an ambitious Board, there is an eagerness for growth and support for the next Head to lead that growth.
- Louisville, Kentucky is a lively, energetic mid-sized city filled with a rich blend of activities, sports, cultural events, a vibrant economy, parks and recreational facilities, a cost of living that is eminently affordable and so much more. The city (and the school) is blessed with a diversity of nationalities, cultures, and activities that often amaze outsiders who thought only “horse racing and whiskey!” The school is poised to ride that wave.

As a relatively young, growing and successful school, MSL also has challenges and opportunities. Lasting personal and professional satisfaction await a visionary, energetic, inspired and inspiring new leader starting July 1, 2026.



Strengths of the School

Among the many strengths a new Head will find are:

- A top-notch Montessori program at all three levels (EC, Lower/upper EI, Middle school).
- A dedicated, trained, caring, connected and passionate faculty and staff, appreciation for whom is often the first thing mentioned when people are asked about the strengths of the school. Of particular note is that while some guides have AMS training and some have AMI training, there is a unified commitment to providing the best student experience across the whole school.
- A facility that, while having some limitations, is attractive, bright, well adapted to Montessori programming, and with capacity to accept additional students as the school grows.
- A supportive and involved parent community, many of whom came seeking Montessori and understand the positive impact the program has on their children.
- A history of conservative approaches to budgeting leading to a history of financial stability.
- The school's dual accreditation (AMS and Cognia) as well as embracing all three levels of Montessori, differentiate MSL from other, mostly small Montessori programs in the area.
- The ethnic, cultural, socio-economic diversity of the students/parents enrich the school community for everyone. Parents will sometimes bring their own knowledge of different cultures to the classrooms, for example.
- Louisville and MSL blend the best of Midwestern and Southern cultures.

Opportunities and Challenges

Among the work waiting for the new head are:

- While the school has realistic visions of growth, it needs comprehensive branding, marketing and outreach to achieve those goals. Many describe the school as “the best kept secret in the landscape of Louisville education.”



- Enrollment patterns have been inconsistent from year to year. In particular the school needs a reliable full EC as the pipeline into the Elementary School. Likewise, the middle school is excellent but small and must have more students in order to optimize the program.
- MSL believes it can be a model of a great Montessori school in the future. There is an opportunity to unite and inspire the entire school community with a compelling and exciting vision for MSL's future.
- The new head will have the opportunity to create a sustainable and functional administrative structure, sufficiently staffed to achieve MSL's ambitious vision.
- While the school is blessed with some long-tenured, terrific Montessori-trained guides, it is ongoing work to attract and retain the excellent staff that is a core strength of the school.
- Budget austerity has provided a solid foundation, but it is time for expansion of enrichment aspects of the program such as art, music, foreign language and a stronger athletics program.
- In some ways, MSL is mature beyond its relatively young years, including a superb student-facing Montessori program. In other ways, it bears marks of adolescence. Specifically, the following need to be addressed:
 - » There are at least 5 different software systems in place.
 - » There is no culture of philanthropy and no development department.
 - » The current head along with a couple of savvy board members, are the de-facto business office for the school although the current budget allows for adding some accounting support to the administration.
 - » The school lacks consistent communications protocols both internally and externally, to assure that people have complete information when they need it.
 - » As with independent schools everywhere, the growth of neurodiverse students is true at MSL. The school needs to be clear whom they can serve well and be sure that they have the resources to fully serve each student they admit.
 - » More parent education can both help parents at home support what is happening at school, and also equip parents to be knowledgeable ambassadors for the school in the broader external community.
 - » The Board is something of a mystery in the school and while nobody wants the board more involved in operations, many would appreciate a better understanding of the school's governance.



Qualities and Personal Attributes

The ideal candidate will be multi-talented, have broad bandwidth across all aspects of school leadership, and bring energy and passion to the Head of School role. Desirable personal qualities include:

- Both leader and manager. Ability to unite the school around a common vision and purpose, while also being highly visible in the daily life of the school from the drop-off/pick-up lanes to the floor of an EC classroom reading to kids. Significant prior experience in the classroom.
- Excellent written and oral communications skills. A strategic marketing perspective to drive the school's outreach efforts. Ability to be a captivating and compelling face of the school, singing the praises of Montessori education and MSL in particular.
- A systems thinker who can assemble, motivate, delegate and hold teams accountable. Significant technological savvy to assure that the school makes maximum use of the tools of both educational technology and school operations support systems.
- A leader who is inclusive and collaborative and seeks input; but also able to be decisive and take prompt action when necessary.
- If not already Montessori certified, the willingness to become so as required by AMS accreditation.
- Significant financial literacy to take a leading role in budget development and implementation.
- Experience working in a best-practices relationship with a board.
- Familiarity with the landscape of neurodiverse students in independent schools.
- A desire to connect with the external community both to increase the visibility of the school in Louisville, and also to form and leverage partnerships that benefit the school.

Learn More

Click on the links below to learn more about Montessori School of Louisville.

[School Website](#)

[School History](#)

[Why Montessori](#)

[About Louisville, Kentucky](#)



To Apply

Interested and qualified candidates are invited to contact the consultant in confidence. Candidates will ultimately need to submit the following materials as separate PDF documents:

- A cover letter expressing their interest in this particular position;
- A current résumé;
- Statement of experience with and philosophy of progressive and Montessori education;
- A list of five professional references with name, relationship, phone number, and email address of each (references will not be contacted without the candidate's permission) to:

Skip Kotkins

Senior Consultant

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