



As San Tan Charter School embarks on its 14th year as a Montessori school in Gilbert we are excited and grateful for the community support to expand our Montessori program. Our Montessori program began in 2006 with one Primary-Kindergarten classroom and now for the 2020-2021 school year we have ten classrooms spanning from Toddler to Upper Elementary!

This year, our Montessori K-6 community will have its own building, lovingly named “Our Montessori Village,” based on our founding mantra, “It takes a village to raise a child.”

## **Welcome to our “Montessori Village” and our 2020-2021 Montessori Team**

### **Montessori Kindergarten Classroom**

Ms. Clarissa Pollack joins San Tan’s Montessori Program this year as the Kinder Montessori Lead Teacher.

Ms. Pollack was born and raised in Montana and has lived all over the world. She attended Montessori schools growing up and after the birth of her daughter, Ms. Pollack was inspired to become a Montessori teacher (just like her mother and grandmother!). Before training in Montessori Early Childhood Education, she earned her B.A. from The University of Texas at Dallas in Art and Performance and then spent several years travelling, learning, and teaching throughout Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Asia, and the United Kingdom. Ms. Pollack is also an internationally accredited yoga instructor and yoga teacher trainer. Ms. Pollack loves going on adventures with her husband and their wonderful daughter, Eleanor, and she enjoys riding her horse, spending time in nature, and creating art and music. She is excited to share all of her knowledge with her students!

### ***Ms. Melinda Hatch – Kindergarten Assistant***

Ms. Melinda Hatch was San Tan Montessori’s lead Toddler/Primary Transition Montessori classroom assistant and is entering her second year within the San Tan Charter School community. Ms. Hatch has a son, Carter, who will be entering 5<sup>th</sup> grade this year at San Tan. She has been working with younger children since he was a toddler. Previously she has been an assistant in other Montessori schools working with toddlers and Primary for 5 years helping them grow independently in a prepared learning environment.

Ms. Hatch grew up in Midwest City, OK but later decided to move out to Arizona for new adventures. She immediately fell in love with all the beautiful sunshine, sunsets, and mountains! Moving out here was when she first learned and was taught the Montessori Philosophy from her sister-in-law and immediately started to fall in love with it. Ms. Hatch loves being around kids and is passionate about learning. Her goal is to provide an environment with materials and activities that adhere to each child’s unique interests and helping each child feel safe to explore individually, believing children learn through sensory activities to help them with development. She strives to model respect, patience, and care for both children and adults she comes in contact with. When Ms. Hatch is not working she enjoys spending time with her family, going to baseball games, sightseeing, shopping, baking/cooking, and going to movies.



### **Montessori 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Lower Elementary 1 Classroom**

Ms. Natassia DeWyke is thrilled to embark on her sixth year at San Tan as the Montessori Elementary (1-3) Teacher.

Growing up an Air Force brat she had the opportunity to travel the world and experience great culture, food, and art. This inspired her passion for photography, which led her to The University of Arizona where she attained her BFA in Photography in 2007. Go Wildcats! An itch in her heart guided her toward Montessori in 2014, which in turn led her to the Khalsa Montessori Teacher Education Program where she earned her Montessori Early Childhood Education and Elementary I certifications. Natassia and her incredible husband are the proud parents of an amazing little lady who attends San Tan Montessori. Fulfilling her passion as a Montessori educator and witnessing her own child blossom in Montessori has been a joyful experience. It confirms that Montessori was the right direction for her family and her! In addition to her daughter, her family also includes her French bulldog, Ricky Ricardo. When not teaching, Natassia enjoys spending time with her family, practicing yoga, brunching, photography, baking, traveling, hand lettering, and most recently sewing/quilting/embroidery!

### **Montessori 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Lower Elementary 2 Classroom**

Ms. Jamie Hinch will be joining San Tan's Montessori Program this year as a Montessori Lower Elementary Lead co-teacher.

Mrs. Hinch has worked in a Montessori setting for the past nine years. First as an assistant, then after receiving her Certification from Houston Montessori Center as a lead teacher. She earned a Bachelor of Science from Northern Arizona University in International Hospitality Management. After working as a Food and Beverage Manager for Walt Disney World, she moved back to Arizona and worked for First Things First. It was there she developed a love for working with children and decided to go into the field of education. Ms. Hinch's mission is to help each child reach his or her full potential and to become an independent learner.

She and her husband Justin have two sons, Jayce and Jacob, who will also be attending San Tan Charter School. Their son Jazper will be joining the family at the beginning of the school year.

### ***Carol Berhost - Lower Elementary 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> Co-lead:***

Ms. Berhost is going into her fifth year as an Assistant in the Lower Elementary class with Ms. DeWyke. She also serves as one of our Culture Specialists. Ms. Berhost has three boys and will be going into her ninth year as a parent of STCS. Her boys will be in 4th grade, 5th grade, and her oldest is starting his senior year. When they were younger, Ms. Berhost spent countless hours volunteering at our school.

Prior to having children, Ms. Berhost worked in the corporate world for many years, most recently as a Corporate Training Manager. However, her dream was always to be a teacher. She loves interacting with and building relationships with children. She has a gift for helping children find their talents and building in them the confidence to pursue those talents. Ms. Berhost is currently working toward her Lower Elementary certification through North American Montessori Center and expect to be finished in December.

Ms. Berhost grew up in a small town in Southwestern Colorado and while she misses the mountains and seasons, she appreciates the beauty of the Arizona desert and sunsets. Ms. Berhost's favorite things to do are spending time with her boys along with camping, fishing, reading, baking and taking road trips.

### **Montessori 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Grade Lower & Upper Elementary Classroom**

Mrs. Mary Navarro will be joining San Tan's Montessori Program in the Fall as an Upper Elementary Lead Teacher. She is an Arizona Native and lives in Chandler with her wonderful husband, Robert, and their four children- Josh, Lincoln, Lulu and Cruz.

Mrs. Navarro has spent the past ten years in Montessori Education, first as an Assistant, then as a Lead Teacher and Special Education Director. She holds her Bachelor's Degree in Educational Studies from Arizona State University, her Post-Bac in Special Education from Rio Salado College and soon her Master's Degree in Educational Leadership from Northern Arizona University. Ms. Navarro also maintains her Arizona State Teaching Certification in both Elementary and Special Education, as well as two Lower Elementary and one Upper Elementary Montessori Certification from Houston Montessori Center and the South Mountain Montessori Teacher Preparation Program. She is passionate about social emotional learning and is currently in training to become a Conscious Discipline Certified Instructor.

Mrs. Mary Navarro hopes to grow the Montessori Upper Elementary Program from fourth through sixth grade in the coming years. She is excited to bring her Montessori experience and state standard knowledge into the classroom to help foster the whole child approach within our charter school community.

### **Montessori K-6 Outdoor Environment/MakerSpace Classroom**

Ms. Megan Hubbard will be going into her second year as the Montessori Specials Teacher, and her third year as a San Tan parent. She has two children in the Montessori program, a son who will be in first grade, and a daughter in the toddler program. Ms. Hubbard lives in Gilbert with her husband, two kids, and many pets. A San Francisco native, Ms. Hubbard moved to Arizona in 2015 to be closer to family.

Ms. Hubbard holds a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from Arizona State University. She will soon graduate with her Master's Degree in Learning Design and Technologies, also from ASU. Ms. Hubbard is a certified Outdoor Classroom Level II Specialist, and she has had continuing education in desert permaculture, composting, gardening with children, and early childhood education. Before taking a few years off to stay home with her children, Ms. Hubbard taught Toddler, Pre-K, and Kindergarten students at an outdoor classroom school for nearly a decade.

Ms. Hubbard is excited to help expand the Montessori program at San Tan this year, and she looks forward to bringing nature and project-based learning into the Montessori Outdoor Environment and Makerspace classes.