

STATE OF THE SCHOOL

November 2024



“Inspiring Children to Expand their Minds,
Nurture their Spirits, and Steward the Earth”



FRANCISCAN
MONTESSORI EARTH SCHOOL
REMARKABLY DIFFERENT



A MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

The early years of a child's education are critical in laying the foundation for learning and growth. During this time, our children absorb knowledge at amazing rates and develop the skills necessary for their future success in school — and life. At the Franciscan Montessori Earth School, we recognize that it is the very essence of our future citizens that we are entrusted with each and every day. "Expanding minds, nurturing spirits, stewarding the Earth." This is more than our tagline, this is our purpose, to intentionally instill within our students the tools and attitudes to shape their world and those around them.

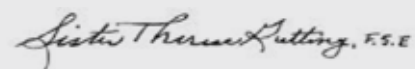
At the Franciscan Montessori Earth School, we encourage children to learn and explore. This is the core essence of Montessori Education. Our classes are arranged so that our guides are able to plan lessons and activities that keep our students engaged in learning. During each stage of development, our students are developing the foundations of reading, writing, and math, in addition to all the other skills that Montessori methodology provides. They are questioning, searching to find answers, and solving problems creatively. Every day, our students explore their interests and apply their existing knowledge to other fields of study. We make certain that our students feel safe taking risks and exploring areas that are unfamiliar to them. We strive to couple academics with the moral and ethical standards of Catholic education and the insight of Franciscan Spirituality. It is this approach that

makes the Franciscan Montessori Earth School unique, and why I am proud to be your Head of School.

At the same time, learning in the early years goes beyond academics. Catholic education fulfills its purpose as

"...critical, systematic transmission of culture in the light of faith." This is a crucial time for developing social skills students will use throughout their lives. At the Franciscan Montessori Earth School, our students learn how to communicate with others, operate as part of a community, negotiate and solve problems diplomatically, show respect and compassion for others, and use appropriate manners throughout the day. We foster student's respect for themselves, others, and the earth we share—because our responsibility extends far beyond the classroom. This is the mission of education at the Franciscan Montessori Earth School.

I invite you to visit our school and see our students and guides in action. You'll view first-hand how your child will benefit from attending Franciscan Montessori Earth School.



*Sister Therese Gutting, FSE,
Head of School*

COMMUNITY UPDATE

Since 1977, the staff of the Earth School has been part of the enduring strength and legacy of the school. They are essential to our mission as educators, and have always played an instrumental role in the formation of not only our classroom communities, but of our overall school community.

At the Franciscan Montessori Earth School, we embrace Dr. Montessori's methodology for progressive education, including age-appropriate application of her pedagogy for interdependent learning from Pre-K through Middle School. Our entire staff represent the essence of what has made our school successful for so many families. It is important to remember that true excellence moves beyond a set of principles and outcomes – it is a set of beliefs at the core that determine a school's way of thinking and being. Our staff community, coupled with our parent community, has continually created and sustained a vigorous model of a flourishing institution.

Every year there are changes- changes to the facilities, changes in staff, changes in programs, all of which we carefully consider to ensure that our community serves the needs of all of our students and families. Sometimes we can anticipate these changes, while sometimes we must work with the unexpected. This year, these changes have resulted in changes to our Upper and Lower Elementary classrooms. Due to the unexpected medical issues with our Business Manager, Peter Einwaller, Lorelea MacAfee, the Alder Room guide, took an extended leave to support her husband, Peter. Meredith Peters has stepped into her shoes during this time. Stepping into Peter's shoes has been Sister Maria Serra Garcia, who has traveled from British Columbia to ensure that our financial affairs continue to function efficiently. Other changes have occurred in our Upper Elementary classrooms, with Carrie Cox having taken over the role of Guide in the Maple room, while her position as Classroom Assistant in the Oak room has been taken over by Monica Garcia.

Children's House staffing remains the same. The Children's House represents the base of the Montessori learning experience at the Earth School, and their long tenure is truly appreciated and valued.

Our staffing in the Adolescent Program remains the same, which allows for the ongoing growth and development of the pinnacle of the Montessori experience at the Earth School.

We value our staff, and know that they endeavor to bring the very best of Montessori education to your student each day.

In addition to our staffing changes, long anticipated updates of the school library and gym have not only increased the utility of these spaces, but they have improved the aesthetics of both of these constantly used areas.

Additionally, we have added an additional three water bottle stations to the school, making these accessible for all of our students.



STAFF PROFILE: GLADYS MUNOZ



Gladys is the Head Guide of our Upper Elementary, having come to FMES in 2001. An impressive woman by any standards, Gladys is an incredibly well educated member of our staff. While the Earth School boasts many educated staff members, Gladys brings degrees in Chemical Engineering and Education Curriculum with a concentration in STEM to her classroom community.

Gladys is originally from the Philippines, but since 2001 she has called the Earth School her home. In addition to her husband Edwin, she has three children, Carmelle, Christian, and Mary, all of whom attended FMES.

Gladys, in addition to her dedication to her students, is also responsible for an ongoing string of victories for FMES Chess Club members. Her training and instruction has proved to be a potent combination.

But a quote from her former assistant says it all about Gladys:

“What stands out for me as a Willow Room parent and former assistant, is the dedication she has to her students. Gladys spends so much of her mental energy thinking about her students... their challenges, how she can coax out their best, how to inspire them, and what jokes best bring out their laughter and their secrets! It has been amazing to see her connect with students and how her dedication to them fosters an environment where learning is fun, dynamic and children are able to be their best self.”

THE SISTERS

“The Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist, a pontifical religious community, offers a 21st Century response to St. Francis’ call to service and peace. Bonded through a profession of the religious vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, the life of each sister is dedicated to serving the needs of others through the Franciscan Life Center Network, which provides counseling, health care, aging programs, education and other services throughout the world. The Sisters are pioneers, just

as were St. Francis and Maria Montessori, and the pioneering work of the Franciscan Community are emblematic of that spirit.”

Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist Board A Pontifical Community
Founded in 1973. Avenue Meriden Connecticut USA

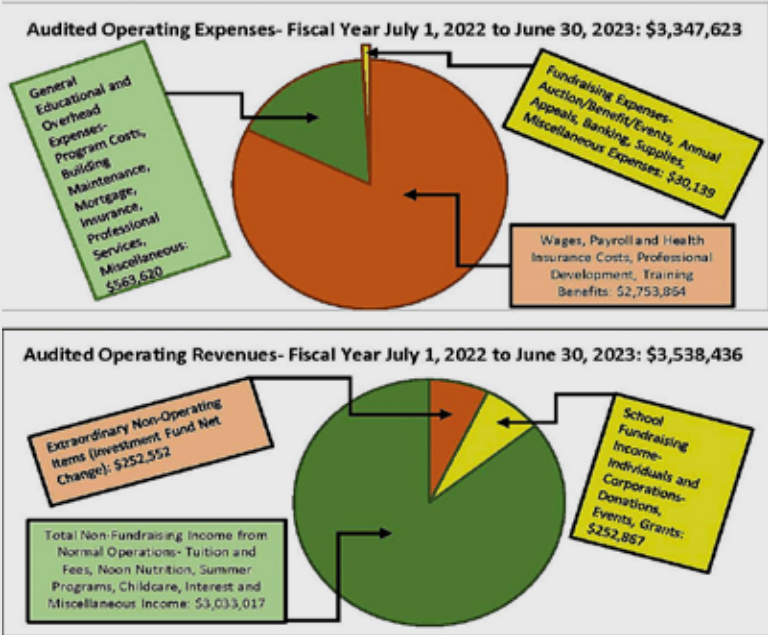


FINANCES

The Franciscan Montessori Earth School is a part of the Franciscan Life Center Network. Our finances are audited internally on a regular basis, and the entire Franciscan Life Center Network is audited yearly. This audited report provides us with the information that we use in annual reports, strategic planning, and fundraising solicitations and proposals.

We consider our financial outlook in a variety of ways, both locally and as part of the Franciscan Life Center Network. Our Finance Committee is part of the Advisory Council, and working in concert with Administration, our Business Manager and Finance Committee members to help craft our approach to tuition, budgeting, and allocations of funds for salaries, facilities, and programs. Within the Advisory Council, ongoing discussion and updating of the Strategic Plan helps to determine how both our income and expenditures are allocated. These plans are further discussed, refined, and approved (if necessary) by the Board of the Franciscan Life Center Network.

We value not only the gift of trust you provide when you enroll your student, we also understand the expectations that you have for us to use your tuition dollars wisely. We understand that our goal must always be the best value for your tuition, reflected in the quality of your student’s education. This year, with enrollment matching the conservative numbers that we had budgeted for, we find ourselves with a sound financial picture. This consistent enrollment, and the subsequent planning to best serve these students, will continue to be part of the financial planning scheduled for the near future.



CHALLENGES

The Earth school business model is firmly based on a commitment to the needs of our students and our community, with goals that have remained consistent since the beginning of the school in 1977.

Primary challenges for the Earth School consist of addressing both how we fund our operations, and how we can ensure that all families that wish to attend the Earth School can be accommodated. As we address planning for the future of FMES, these needs will continue to drive our planning. Every year, we provide support in excess of \$90,000 in tuition support, making sure that students and their families can sustain their place in our community, even if adversity or other situations would make it difficult for families to stay at FMES. This year's annual appeal is focused on making these funds more accessible in the coming years.

Each year, we assess and address the state of our facilities, our staff, and our support infrastructure to ensure that they remain within the guidelines of our ongoing strategic planning. These plans address a sound understanding of the overall needs of the entire community, with the judicious selection of necessary changes or revisions. We continue to seek the funds to grow and expand, while ensuring that we adequately plan for the use of operational monies to provide for a safe, secure, and meaningful educational community. The collective work of the Franciscan Board in Connecticut, our own Advisory Council, and our Finance Committee all work together to create a focused approach to this ongoing work.

The Earth School also works to aggressively market the school within the area community, allowing prospective families to realize the opportunity to consider FMES as a school of choice. These Marketing and Admissions strategies are significant challenges that the Earth School must confront. In addition to the growing number of schools that present serious competition, the nature of marketing and media outreach evolves



constantly. This changing media-driven market creates an increasingly complex marketing situation for all schools. We are not alone in seeking to confront this challenge as we seek to heighten the profile of the school within the private school community in and around Portland. We will continue to present the message that the Earth School is a dynamic alternative, worthy of the consideration of all prospective families. This competitive market provides many alternatives for families, and we seek to share the message that the Earth School is the best possible educational option available.

We utilize the combined talents and expertise of our own staff, the Franciscan Community, the Advisory Council and consultants, and more, to continually change and upgrade school programs. As we constantly seek to enhance programs, provide for staff training, and add necessary upgrades to our programs, the challenges of such a large program and facility are ongoing. This year's Building Assessment is an example of the fact-driven approach to institutional management.

The school leadership has worked constantly to ensure that FMES is based on a strong financial picture. In addition to the annual budget, the school has a two-million-dollar endowment fund that allows for a buffer in times of financial concern.

The Earth School's entire community can and will address our challenges. We are confident that the changes we make will create a school that reflects the needs of the entire community. The Earth School will confront these issues as always - with a firm conviction and faith in the entire community that supports us.



STUDENT

FEEDBACK

Three Period Lessons

A certified Montessori teacher uses the scientific approach (observe, predict, plan, observe again) to help each child move forward in their learning development. Montessori Teachers have been trained in observation, document their observations, and then reflect on how these observations can be used in planning upcoming lessons. This Montessori method of consistent assessment of each child is embedded in FMES teaching practices and provides the framework for the teacher to follow each individual child and to witness the child moving forward on their learning journey. If there is a critical difference in the Montessori method compared to other methodologies, it is this key practice.

In addition, Montessori teachers use the 3-Period Lesson as an amazing tool to introduce new terms/concepts and are able to use it to track (*in other words, test*) the child's progress on whether they are internalizing their learning. The first period is the introduction, the second consists of the child practicing their association of the new term/concept, and the third period is when we ask the child to name what they learned. The teacher spends much time in the second period adding movement and opportunities for children to use their hands in their learning. During this period, teachers can tell if the child needs more work with this particular concept, if we need to give a refresher on a previous lesson, or if we are ready to move the child forward.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

For the Earth School, Strategic Planning is a key element of overall planning. Several years ago we created the basic long and short term planning templates for the Strategic Plan, emphasizing the goal of sustainability and measured growth as being key to the future of the Franciscan Montessori Earth School and the Middle School. Even with constantly changing situations driving revisions, these baseline documents ensure that our plans reflect solid parameters for strategic decisions

Each year our strategic plan is updated with the Administration, Advisory Board and its Committees, and the Governing Board of the Franciscan Life Center Network. (This group represents the entire Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist's Professional network). Based on our previous strategic plans, each year's current plan is a dynamic document, which allows for deliberate planning steps, but also allows for changes necessitated by circumstance. Every year we initiate a very comprehensive rewrite of our near-term strategic plans, drawing in members participating in committees from throughout our extended community. This year our next accreditation

process with the Western Catholic Educational Association will be part of our planning. This form of accreditation will allow the school to best represent our position not only as a Montessori Independent School, but as a "Catholic Montessori School". How we continue to leverage this description of the Earth School will be an ongoing conversation with all concerned stakeholders. Other considerations, such as the ramifications of our newly completed Building Assessment, will also be part of our short and long-term plans.

This is a very comprehensive process, and represents our ongoing steps in providing a definitive roadmap for the functioning of the entire school and its programs.

Since its inception, Strategic Planning has been an instrumental part of the Earth School Experience. Based on the 45 plus years of success, we anticipate that our attention to planning will continue in the coming years, with the understanding that we always need to pay attention to changing circumstances.



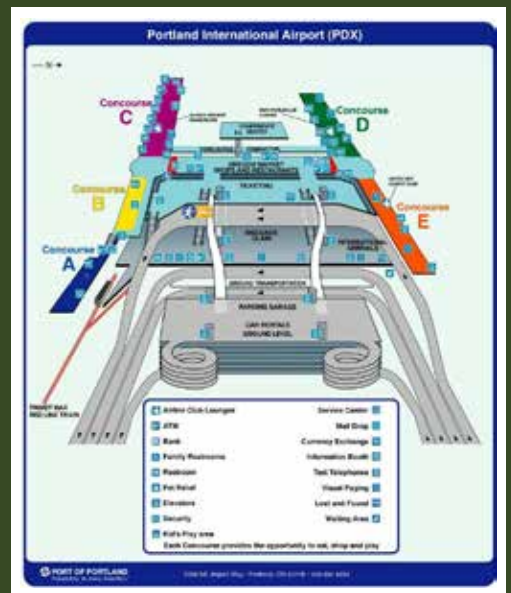
MEET OUR ALUMNI: CHRIS DAVAIS



Chris Davais was born in 1979, and after attending Providence Montessori School, he became a member of the Franciscan Montessori Earth School community. By the time Chris reached Middle School, it became obvious that he possessed above average skills in mathematics and programming. Working with our initial IT firm, Chris helped establish the first in-school intranet that served students in every classroom. As a member of our High School, Chris worked with professionals to establish the first school network at our current building. While attending school after graduating from FMES, he worked with another alum family to create their own internet firm that specialized in software serving the needs of the Healthcare Insurance community. During that time, in addition to being a regular financial contributor to FMES, he also conducted summer classes for FMES students where they constructed computers used throughout the school, all contributions on his part. His patience and instruction was a key part of many student's introduction to the computer sciences.

In the last two years, Chris has become part of the Port of Portland IT staff, managing many of the aspects of PDX online identity. Having a lifelong association with aviation as a licensed pilot, Chris has made a new career working with airport planning and management to create a premier online environment. If you see Chris at PDX, be sure to tell him "hello."

We are blessed to have students that remember the Earth School while they make their way through life. Chris is a great representative of someone who has never forgotten where his voyage began.



FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS



The Franciscan Montessori Earth School is accredited with the Western Catholic Education Association, the Northwest Association of Independent Schools, and is a member of the Oregon Montessori Association and of the National Association of Independent Schools and the National Catholic Education Association. Our Guides are highly qualified AMI Montessori teachers with additional staff qualified to meet the needs of all of our children.

We move forward with our deep Catholic faith, a strong fiscal position and a dedication to Montessori pedagogy complemented by the sacredness of the Franciscan Mission to bring all creation into the harmonious relationship with God.

Each year I see the marvelous growth of our students, and feel the support of our community. We are blessed to have our families and friends as part of our community.

May the Lord Bless you, May He shine His grace upon you and may He grant you His peace.

Sister Therese Gutting, F.S.E.

*Sister Therese Gutting, F.S.E.
Head of School*



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