



Joliet Montessori School

Passion for Learning. Success for Life.

2023-2024

Annual Report



Joliet Montessori School

1600 Root Street

Crest Hill, IL 60403

FACULTY AND STAFF

Head of School

Heidi Hodge

Asst. Head of School

Eileen Kozlowski

Parent Toddler Guide

Heidi Hodge

Primary Guides and Assistants

Kristina Doughan, Gosia Wolf,
Minerva Widner & Amy Litchfield

Elementary Guide and Assistant

Rachael Gonzalez, Gwen Carr
Michelle Knollenberg

Administrative Staff

Christina Ayala-Ortega &
Jennifer Rutherford

Before & After Care Staff

Michelle Knollenberg, Hailey
Zambrano, Stefanie Gutierrez

Letter from the Head of School

Dear Joliet Montessori School Families and Friends,

As I reflect on SY2023-24, I am leaning towards the future with more excitement than ever.. This was another pivotal year for our school as we increased enrollment and our Board of Trustees approved the opening of a third primary classroom for SY2024-25! It has been a long time coming for our little school to start booming again and here we are on the cusp of what we have all been working so hard for these last several years.



This year welcomed exciting highlights including new flooring and paint in the lower and upper elementary classrooms and entrance way, new faux tunnel for the playground, and new LED lighting throughout the entire school. We are grateful to our past donors for contributions to the Annual Fund to help make these necessary upgrades possible along with the grant from ComEd.

The AMS (American Montessori Society) accreditation process was a huge undertaking this year. We brought in parents, board members and staff to meet monthly from the beginning of the year through April to review and pull data to ensure our school is aligned with the AMS standards. This took a great deal of thoughtful reflection, work, collaboration and hours of time. In April, our team finalized everything and submitted all documentation for approval. We look forward to our accreditation visit in SY 2024-25 from an AMS team to verify documentation, and conduct interviews and observations. This will be an exciting step for our school community!

Without further ado, I am extremely pleased to share our Fiscal Year 2024 Annual Report with you.

Very warm regards,

Heidi Hodge, Head of School

PARENT CHILD

Our Parent Child program was able to deliver 3 sessions this year with 10 students in each session. Our students were made up of siblings to current students along with new families looking to join the program. We had two children from Parent Child join the primary program between August 2023 through January 2024. Six other students submitted applications to join the primary program for the 2024-2025 school year.

Due to the Board's approval to open up a third primary program for the 2024-2025 school year, the Parent Child program was terminated to make more space for our growing school. Mrs. Heidi Hodge instructed this class since 2017 and had grown the program tremendously. It was with a heavy heart to close the program due to growth, but we are optimistic to have it again in the future.



PRIMARY

Our two primary programs welcomed 24 new students to the community this year! Ms. Kristina Doughan and Mrs. Gosia Wolf continued to lead the Oak and Willow Rooms, respectively. We welcomed Minerva Widner back to finish out the last four months of the school year. Minerva has been a primary assistant teacher for JMS for many years and retired in 2018 to provide a Montessori homeschool learning experience for her granddaughter. She has subbed for JMS for the last two years and has signed on with JMS to continue in the Oak Room as an assistant to Kristina Doughan for SY 2024-25. We are thrilled to have her back in the community and serving our students.

Both primary classrooms joined together this year to host a Stone Soup celebration in honor of Thanksgiving. The children happily brought in ingredients to collaborate in this wonderful feast! With the help of our parent volunteers, the children moved tables and chairs into the Willow Room with freshly pressed tablecloths and decorated placemats. Our kindergartners had the important role of serving their younger classmates water and soup before settling into their own chairs to eat together. What a wonderful way to practice the fundamental pillars of grace and courtesy as a community!

Parent volunteers drove our kindergartners to the JJC Planetarium where they had a full circle experience with everything they've learned about the solar system this year.

This year, we had the pleasure of meeting Mrs. Kate Flynn, who subbed regularly in our primary classrooms as a way of getting to know each other. Kate applied for the lead teaching role for the opening of the new primary classroom in SY 2024-25, and after her many times subbing in the spring, she happily accepted the position.



ELEMENTARY

Our elementary programs welcomed two new students this year! Mrs. Rachael Gonzalez and her assistant, Michelle Knollenberg, finished out their fourth year at JMS in the lower elementary classroom. At the same time, Mrs. Gwen Carr rounded out her third year with the upper elementary students. Ms. Gwen has been an upper elementary teacher in two different schools for 15 years, and said to me at the end of this school year, "This was my BEST year ever as an elementary Montessori teacher."

Both programs incorporated a new Montessori Spanish program by Puente Bilingue, with the assistance of Mrs. Christina Ayala-Ortega, for pronunciation guidance. The program runs parallel with the Montessori language boxes, making the process of learning vocabulary easier for the students.

Lower Elementary introduced new materials in the classroom to promote better research skills among students, along with a rotating bookshelf, sewing activities, lesson trackers for work journals, and independent science experiments. They enjoyed visits from multiple parents to assist with more advanced food preparation, such as Rice Krispy treats, cookie decorating, fruit salsa, fruit sushi, and smoothies. They also took a trip to the Beverly Arts Center to see the performance, *Beauty & the Beast*.

Upper Elementary took a week-long trip to Nature's Classroom Institute in Wisconsin in September, along with other Montessori schools, as part of their nature curriculum. There, they continued to collaborate with the same two Montessori schools in the suburban areas. The students presented their first wax museum for younger students and their families at the end of the school year. This year, the classroom launched a pizza business, affectionately called *Pizza Pizzazz*, to provide our school community with a monthly pizza lunch while generating funds to benefit the classroom.

We also celebrated the graduation of Liam Schumacher, who has been a student at JMS since he was 3 years old, starting in Ms. Doughan's class. Since the graduation ceremony takes place in the morning on a school day, we decided to include our lower elementary and kindergarten students in the celebration. There was something very special about celebrating the graduation of a student who has been with us since the beginning. We are incredibly honored and thankful for the collaboration and partnership with Liam's parents over these years.



Board of Trustees

Board of Trustees

2023-2024

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Letter From the Board

To Our Families, Faculty, Staff, Alumni, Donors and Friends,

As the school year closes, we reflect on what a pivotal year this has been for JMS on our path towards stability and continued growth. Our biggest step in that direction this past year was the board's approval of opening a third primary classroom next year. Growth in our primary program offers significant long-term stability in the years to come and is the base of our school.

This was also a significant year of growth on our board, as we welcomed six new trustees! One of the primary roles of the JMS Board is to set the long-term strategic direction for the school, answering the question, "What are we working towards as an organization over the next five to ten years?" To create and sustain this vision, we rely on a full board of active and engaged trustees. It has been exciting to have so many new voices in the room this year as we continue to plan for the school's future.

We are looking forward to another year of growth in 2024-2025. This coming year will be one of reflection, assessment, and information gathering as the Board of Trustees prepares to create the new strategic plan for JMS in June 2024.

On behalf of the 2023-24 board of trustees, thank you all for your continued support of our school!

Best,

Jessica Schumacher, President

2023-2024 Board of Trustees

School Performance

At the end of each school year, our students transitioning from one program to the next are evaluated on their benchmarking skills in several academic categories, social-emotional development, and executive functioning. This section highlights student performance with our kindergartners, third graders, and sixth graders.

Kindergartners

- 92% are readers
- 92% understand counting one-to-one correspondence, and number symbols for 1-1000
- 92% request lessons (taking initiative)
- 75% recover from disappointment
- 75% persists in the face of difficulty

3rd Graders

- 83% demonstrate key comprehension skills
- 100% compose a structured paragraph in their writing
- 100% understand place value through millions, and understand patterns and relationships within
- 100% recognizes and names geometry shapes and geometric concepts
- 100% name all the continents and some countries of the world, as well as the states of the U.S.
- 100% recovers from disappointment
- 83% persists in the face of challenge
- 100% seek mastery rather than adult approval
- 100% collaborates and compromises in a group

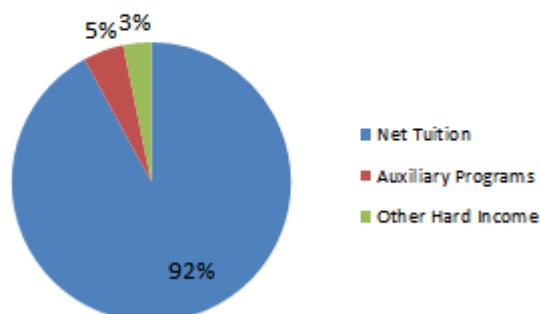
6th Graders (based on only one sixth-grade graduate - the following areas were fully achieved)

- recovers from disappointment
- persists in the face of challenge
- seeks mastery rather than adult approval
- collaborates and compromises in a group
- demonstrates reading skills and strategies
- proofreads and edits written texts to improve written work, to enhance clarity and effectiveness
- demonstrates fluency with decimals and fractions, including solving complex real-world and mathematical problems using all four operations with decimals and fractions
- demonstrates general knowledge and understanding of human history from the Paleolithic to the present.

Financial Performance (in thousands)

Financial highlights for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2024 include:

OPERATING REVENUE

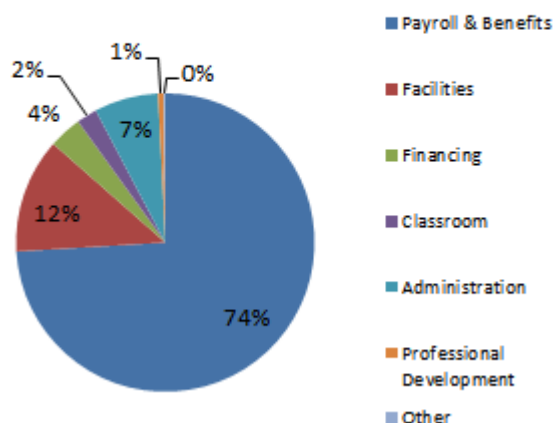


Enrollment of in our primary and elementary programs generated total tuition revenue of \$701. Numbers remained steady throughout the school year.

Six students received financial aid awards, all funded through our donors' generosity.

Other programs (extended care & parent/child), contributed additional revenue of \$34.

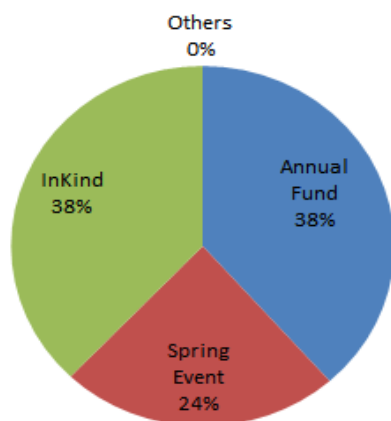
OPERATING EXPENSE



The Montessori Method is dependent upon our excellent directors and assistants. Thus, it is no surprise that Payroll & Benefit costs comprise 75% of total spending. Our amazing staff really stepped up this year to deliver a excellent in-classroom experience and keeping our parent community engaged.

Facilities spending include the recurring cost of utilities and building/grounds maintenances such as: HVAC & electrical repairs, cleaning services, mowing, plowing & security.

FUNDRAISING



Cash reserves of \$93 represent over one month of operating expense.

Donors to JMS' annual fund are listed. The generosity and enthusiasm of our donors has been remarkable, with our Board of Trustees leading the way with 100% participation!

Annual Fund Donors

Golden Beads (\$1,000 and above)

Don & Katherine Londergon
Pepper Construction
Cemeno's Pizza
Ryan & Sara Harter
Bettylou & Chris Zmudka
Mark Karner
FORVIS
Steven & Donna Martin

Pink Tower (\$500-999)

Aaron & Eileen Kozlowski
Patrick & Dana Burke
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Terry D'Arcy
Whitney Freund
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David & Celeste Morimoto
Greg & Tanya Alltop
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Brown Stairs (under \$200)

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Sean & Rabeca McDonald
Tricia Cann
Catalpa Room
Sue Hutchison
Gwen Carr
Joseph Roth & Marcella De Mauro
Michael & Marina Kostyra
Ricardo & Lynn Gonzalez

In-Kind Gifts

It is with great appreciation that we recognize the following friends of JMS for their continued support:

Gail Loughlin – for the donation of mulch for Gardening Day

Aaron Kozlowski – for providing life-saving CPR and First Aid training to the staff

Patrick Burke - for facilitating the ComEd incentive to upgrade to LED lighting

IT Solutions – for donating help with technology

Very Special Thanks

Andrea Londergan for applying and receiving a \$5,000 grant through the Trimas Foundation for Joliet Montessori School!

This donor listing reflects gifts presented to the school during the 2023-2024 Annual Fund Campaign. Gifts received after June 30, 2024 are considered gifts toward the next Campaign and will be reflected in next year's Annual Report. Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this report. If you believe you have been erroneously omitted, please contact 815.741.4180 and we will rectify the error. We appreciate your support and generosity.