

FALL/WINTER 2018

THE FRANCES XAVIER WARDE SCHOOL

# CHARISM

MAGAZINE



TODAY'S LEARNERS:  
INSIDE THE FXW CLASSROOM

The Frances Xavier Warde School is an independent, Catholic elementary school in downtown Chicago that provides an academically excellent, values-oriented education to students of all ethnic, religious, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds in a child-centered urban environment.

At FXW, we are guided by our four Charisms. We partner with our families to nurture faith development for our Catholic students and engage all of our students to learn about and respect other faith traditions. FXW focuses on educating the whole child, including social-emotional development, a comprehensive arts program, and a rigorous curriculum aimed at developing critical thinkers who are prepared to live as global citizens in the world. As a keystone of our diverse community, we provide need-based scholarships to children throughout the Chicago area.

Our Charisms serve as a roadmap for shaping and teaching our children. We create an individualized educational experience that recognizes each child as unique. Our Charisms are the gifts that FXW gives to its families and to its students.

## Charism Defined:

Any good gift that flows from God's love to humans.

## The FXW Charisms

### DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

A Community that is purposefully diverse and intentionally inclusive

### FAITH

A Community of faith that welcomes and embraces all faith traditions

### ACADEMICS

A Community that is preparing thinkers and leaders in an academically enriched environment

### SERVICE

A Community that is motivated by faith to serve others

## Board of Trustees

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# CONTENTS



## NEWS

- 5 Letter from the Head of School
- 36 Around Campus
- 38 Alumni News & Notes
- 42 Annual Report Overview

## FEATURES

- 6 Mathematics at FXW:  
Innovative But Not "New"
- 12 Purpose & Passion: The Preschool Program
- 18 Fertilizing the Soil: "Acquiring" Spanish
- 22 What FXW Means to the Franklin Family
- 26 Alumnae in the Classroom
- 30 Why I Teach
- 32 Come to the Rug







# Letter from the Head of School

**Walking into a classroom at The Frances Xavier Warde School is a magical, motivating experience. So too is talking with our faculty members about what they do, and why.**

Listening to their expertise and watching their passion in action—there is nothing more inspiring. Students' lives are transformed—quite literally right before one's eyes—and to see that and understand, even to a small degree, how it is happening...well, there really is no better word than "magical."

In this issue of *Charism Magazine*, we try to capture some of that magic through words and photographs. We know, of course, that it is impossible to represent fully all that happens in our classrooms, but we hope that these snapshots provide a true and accurate sense of the FXW academic experience.

To that end, in the pages that follow we take a close look at our Mathematics, Spanish, and Preschool programs; we hear from a parent

of FXW alumni who reflects on her children's academic foundation; several of our faculty members—including two alumnae—share the motivation behind their teaching; and we examine the history and intentionality behind our classroom design. This issue also contains our Annual Report Overview, demonstrating once again that none of this is possible without the support and partnership of our parents, grandparents, alumni and alumni parents, trustees, and other friends.

Throughout this school year, we are exploring our Academic Charism, which inspires and guides us to create *a community that is preparing thinkers and leaders in an academically enriched environment*. This look inside the FXW classroom, from a variety of angles and perspectives, is an important piece of that exploration. We hope you enjoy it.

Happy reading,



Michael Kennedy  
Head of School



## MATHEMATICS AT FXW: INNOVATIVE BUT NOT "NEW"

For several decades, people have been talking about "new math." The conversation invariably includes some variation of the sentiment, "That's not the way we did it when I was young," and typically concludes with the feeling that the "new" approach is yet another fad, soon to be replaced by the next big idea.

At The Frances Xavier Warde School, we are embarking on a new approach to mathematics instruction. Rather than being the latest fad, however, this improved methodology is the result of careful planning and is based on years of research and, we believe, will serve all of our students well for many years to come. This article will look at why and how we made the shift, what the new approach is and is not, the underlying goals and philosophy of our instruction, and ways in which parents can assist their children's mathematical development.

These challenges are part of a common misunderstanding about math—some are good at it and some are not, and this spectrum is somehow part of a natural and immutable order.

### Why?

The first question, of course, is "Why the change?"

The simplest answer is that every good school reviews its curriculum on a regular basis, assessing as honestly and objectively as possible the program's strengths and areas for improvement. Our review of our math curriculum, then, was part of our regular review process, but it did not come from a place of deficit. Our students had been performing well on standardized and high school entrance tests, and our alumni were matriculating to outstanding high schools and placed into advanced math classes.

Despite these clear markers of excellence and the obvious strength of our existing math program, we were aware of areas for improvement that are common in U.S. math education. Like many of their national peers, some FXW students lacked conceptual understanding and number flexibility; others thought that math was based on speed, and that if they were not fast, they were therefore bad at math. These challenges are part of a common misunderstanding about math—some are good at it and some are not, and this spectrum is somehow part of a natural and immutable order. Our goal was to meet these challenges head on, and improve our already outstanding program by putting in place the belief that **everyone, with the right teaching and messages, can be successful in math.**

### How?

Our math curriculum review process (*which is explained in more detail in the sidebar on page 9*) began in the 2015–2016 school year. Teachers from Kindergarten through eighth grade were involved with the process, as were administrators and outside experts. We gathered information from many of the high schools that our graduates attended, and we sought input from other independent schools and a variety of professional networks. Our faculty also engaged in extensive professional development, focusing specifically on ways to promote teaching through problem-solving.

With this wealth of information and resources in hand, we closely examined our existing program, *Everyday Math*. We also worked very hard to develop a "Philosophy of Mathematics Education at FXW" that was based on research and consistent with the overall educational philosophy at our School (*see sidebar on page 11*). A key component of this philosophy is the **growth mindset** that we seek to foster in all aspects of the FXW experience—namely, that students' talents are not simply innate gifts but rather can be developed through hard work, good strategies, and input from others.

Teachers encourage students to explore multiple ways to problem-solve.





# ACADEMICS

As we examined various curricular options, we were careful not to simply choose an established program and then adjust our philosophy and approach to fit that program. Instead, we turned that thinking around. We used our philosophy as our primary focus and then considered the options that provided the best fit with our overall goals. With that in mind, we sought a program that would provide an overall framework for our mathematics instruction while also allowing us flexibility to use effective components of various programs. This ultimately led us to the decision to move forward with *Developing Roots* and *Think! Mathematics* for Kindergarten through 5th and a hybrid of programs for 6th through 8th grade.

## What It Is, and What It Is Not

The instructional approach emphasizes the use of problem-solving, hands-on learning, and group work. The focus is not so much on teacher-led instruction, but rather on student-led discovery, with the goal of building both mastery and conceptual understanding. It is adapted from approaches used in Singapore, thus the commonly heard expression “Singapore Math.” It is important to note, though, that Singapore Math is not itself a particular curriculum, but rather a general term for the approach that has led to great success in mathematical instruction in that and other countries.

The approach now is no longer simply about “getting the right answer.” Likewise, the focus is not on speed or on memorizing multiplication tables or long division procedures. Rather, the goal is to have students not only learn the *how* but also

understand the *why* behind a particular technique or algorithm. This approach is based on research that shows that students need not only *factual knowledge* (i.e., rapid retrieval) and *procedural knowledge* (i.e., the sequence of steps), but also *conceptual knowledge*—understanding the meaning and reasoning behind the facts and procedures. These three types of mathematical knowledge complement and strengthen each other.

We no longer follow the model of *I do* (as the teacher), then *we do* (as a class), and then *you do* (as individual students). Instead, we have shifted to allow the students to explore on their own first, individually and in small groups, building on what they have previously learned and discovering new ways to expand on their understanding. Students then have the opportunity to explain their reasoning, which not only solidifies the thinking in their own mind but also allows their classmates to learn from each other. It is typically only at this point that the teacher brings the group together

## Tips for Parents

- There are several good online resources, including tips from Stanford researcher Jo Boaler (search “youcubed advice for parents”), the “Mathodology” website (click on the Mathodology tab), and the “Maths No Problem” website (click on the Mastery tab)
- Encourage your child to think about math in everyday activities and connect math to real-world contexts
- Try not to send the message that you were not good in math or did not enjoy math when you were young

- Our approach is not completely new and different. Students will learn traditional techniques and algorithms, but we also want them to see multiple methods and gain conceptual understanding. So it’s fine to show “how you did it”—just be sure to help your child understand why a particular technique works
- In addition to conceptual and procedural knowledge, students also need factual knowledge, so make sure your child knows the relevant facts for his or her grade
- Try not to worry if your child is struggling. Some degree of struggling is expected and is necessary to develop perseverance and a growth mindset. And if the struggling seems excessive or long-term, always feel free to discuss this with your child’s teacher

There is a beauty to mathematics—encourage your child to discover and enjoy it!

Students have opportunities to present their thinking to the class as a whole.





to summarize the various approaches and emphasize or clarify the particular skill. This approach is based on research that shows that an **active learning process** is much more effective than simply listening to and trying to absorb verbal concepts.

Within this growth mindset philosophy, care is taken to establish a **“mistake friendly” classroom culture**. Students are now much more willing to admit their mistakes and share their thinking because teachers emphasize that this is a key component of the learning process. This too is based on research—by Jason Moser, Jo Boaler and others—that mistakes actually cause synapses in the brain to fire, which provide increased learning opportunities.

## What This Looks Like

If you visit an FXW math classroom, the first thing that might strike you is that during the course of the one hour lesson, the students move around and use different materials. A lot. This is common with instruction in other subjects as well, allowing each student to discover the learning style and strategy that works best for her or him. In math, it also allows the students to interact with each other, and with the problem or task at hand, in a variety of ways. Movement around the classroom occurs in our junior high instruction as well; groups of students might, for example, solve a variety of problems at different spots around the room, providing not only some fun movement but also allowing the teacher to quickly assess which areas need additional practice.

Math classes typically begin with an “anchor task.” For the youngest students, this might be examining photos of common household objects and finding “matches,” using whatever criteria the student chooses—shape, color, size, function, and so on. For 2nd grade, it might be finding multiple methods for solving a subtraction problem, and 4th graders might be asked to agree or disagree with the statement that “an even number can be written as the sum of 2 prime numbers.” By 7th grade, students may be asked to imagine

**Journaling allows students to continue the mathematical discourse and reinforce concepts.**

# CURRICULAR REVIEW: PROCESS & PREPARATION

**O**ur math curriculum review first began informally during the 2015-2016 school year, with both departmental and grade-level conversations about our approach to math instruction, areas where some students were struggling, and possible ways to improve. We followed the “Lesson Study” approach, which is a long-term, highly structured professional development process that focuses on student learning through problem-solving, and partnered with the Chicago Lesson Study Alliance.

During the 2016-2017 school year, the process focused on the overall professional development of the faculty, as well as developing a high school-level course for our 8th grade students. The latter was achieved, in part, through a close working relationship with several area high schools and was then used to establish a supporting curriculum for 6th and 7th grade.

During the 2017-2018 school year, we established a formal Math Curriculum Review Committee, which included teachers from Kindergarten through eighth grade as well as several administrators. The committee worked to articulate FXW’s Philosophy of Math Education, and faculty engaged in ongoing professional development to ensure that the philosophy comes to life in the classroom.

During this past summer, all of our math teachers spent a week in intensive professional development, focusing on instructional best practices. We have continued our partnership with Chicago Lesson Study Alliance and other leading professionals in the field. We also hosted two hands-on informational sessions for parents and plan to offer parents the opportunity to see a lesson in action later this school year. ■



# ACADEMICS



Teachers work with students individually and in small groups as they explore the anchor task.

a four-inch cube made up of one-inch cubes and then determine, if the larger cube is painted blue on all sides, how many of the smaller cubes are unpainted, how many have one blue face, and so on. The anchor task is introduced to the group as a whole—for the younger students typically on the rug at the front of the classroom—and the students then go to tables or other spots in the room to work individually or in small groups. After five to ten minutes of this independent exploration, teachers select students to share methods that they would like to highlight.

The anchor task process emphasizes two key components of FXW's philosophy of mathematics education. First, because each task builds on prior knowledge and pushes students to expand their thinking, it encourages **perseverance in problem-solving**, which in turn is a skill that can be transferred to a wide range of situations. Second, by providing students opportunities to present their thinking, justify their answers, and work in cooperative groups, it promotes **mathematical discourse**, which reinforces concepts and allows students to learn in multiple ways.

The anchor task also helps to develop symbolic thinking by moving students from **concrete to pictorial to abstract** understanding. Instead of beginning with pictures of household objects, those Kindergarten students might instead begin with the actual objects themselves, older students might use manipulatives that signify ones, tens, and hundreds, and junior high students could use algebra tiles. After handling these concrete objects, the students then are better able to understand and create pictures or diagrams that represent the objects and, finally, move to a more abstract or symbolic understanding of why and how various objects might "match," or what happens when you remove 28 beads from a pile of 75.

The remainder of the class typically includes time for students to write in their math journal, which provides a written opportunity for them to continue the mathematical discourse while also establishing an excellent way to track and evaluate their progress. Students might also have "activity time," during which they practice learned skills through collaborative activities and games. This also provides an opportunity for teachers to work more closely with students who need extra practice and gives other students a chance for a "mind workout," where they challenge themselves with higher-order or non-routine tasks. Thus, the structure of the anchor task in particular and the entire

lesson in general has "a low floor and a high ceiling," which provides an entry point for everyone and multiple opportunities for **differentiation** among the students.

## Homework, Assessments, and Standardized Testing

As part of the new curricular approach, homework and assessments look somewhat different. While we have not changed our overall homework policy, many grade levels—particularly for younger students—now emphasize in-class work for mathematics rather than at-home skill practice. This allows students to focus more on multiple strategies and conceptual understanding and deemphasizes speed and memorization. The partnership between home and school will of course continue, but rather than using homework as a tool to keep parents up-to-date, teachers will use newsletters, blogs, and copies of students' math journals as informational tools.

Also, rather than traditional, formal assessments—tests and quizzes with right and wrong answers—teachers are moving more toward "performance task" assessments, which value multiple strategies, creative



thinking, problem-solving, and justification of answers much more than a correct/incorrect dichotomy. We will also conduct a longitudinal study of multiple data points to evaluate and refine our student performance as a whole; this will include not only standardized testing, but also teacher observations and levels of student engagement.

In terms of standardized testing and high school acceptance and placement exams, we are confident that our students will continue to perform exceptionally well, and we will of course monitor this closely. Singapore math programs, like ours, avoid the **mile wide, inch deep** concern that is prevalent in mathematics instruction throughout the United States. Our students will cover all the content in the Common Core State Standards and will, we believe, have a deeper conceptual understanding and be better able to make connections among the topics, rather than simply learning each topic in isolation. This will also be beneficial for things like MAP testing, which is an adaptive test in which the questions adjust to find each student's unique level of knowledge. Because we are now encouraging problem-solving and higher-level thinking, it is possible that some students will access questions in MAP that they previously would not have seen.

### A Fad?

We used our previous math curriculum for over two decades, and we fully expect that our new curricular approach will last as long and be even more successful in meeting the needs of all of our students. This problem-solving approach to math instruction was formalized in 1980 and there are now over 30 years of data to support its success. Moreover, because of our careful review process and the related training and professional development of our faculty, our teachers are adapting to the new approach with skill, confidence, and enthusiasm.

Is it *new math*? No, not exactly. But we believe that it is *innovative and improved math*, and that will lead to even greater success for our students. ■

**Journaling allows students to continue the mathematical discourse and reinforce concepts.**

## THE FXW PHILOSOPHY OF MATH EDUCATION:

**T**he mathematics curriculum and instruction at FXW manifests our belief in and commitment to all students needing and deserving the opportunity to develop comprehension, competence, and confidence to master the mathematics challenges in grade school and develop the skills, love, and appreciation of mathematics to succeed in higher levels of education and in life. Through fostering a perpetual growth mindset, students grow confident that they can improve as mathematicians and that mistakes are valuable to develop the brainpower that will lead to higher achievement. Instruction, demanding high-level student engagement and mathematical discourse, challenges students to reason with flexibility and imagination to explore multiple approaches to problem solving. By openly and consistently supporting perseverance and resilience at FXW, students internalize the confidence that they can succeed if they keep trying. Mathematics is inclusive of and essential to all students, so teachers challenge each student at his or her appropriate level. Students engage in an active learning processes from the concrete to pictorial to abstract. Finally, FXW works to teach math in an authentic manner, using an interdisciplinary approach when possible, so that students can apply what they have learned to enrich their experiences in the world around them. ■



## PURPOSE & PASSION: THE PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

By Liz Cummins and Georgia Hawkins

Liz Cummins and Georgia Hawkins have taught together in the FXW Preschool Program for twelve years. They reflect here on the goals of the Program, the experiences and opportunities that they and the other teachers provide, and the many things that make the FXW approach so successful and unique.



Giving Preschool students classroom jobs helps to develop independence and a sense of responsibility.

### Building Community

The first thing about the FXW Preschool Program that strikes you is that three- and four-year-olds are together in one classroom. As a teacher, that initially sounds somewhat overwhelming. How are you possibly going to meet the needs of all of these individual children who have really varying needs and abilities?

You quickly understand, however, that this approach offers such a unique opportunity for the four-year-olds to take on a leadership role, and it really gives them practice being patient and empathetic with the younger learners. The three-year-olds also gain so much in terms of enriching their play scenarios, strengthening their language skills, and learning creative ways to solve problems. This has been the structure from the very beginning of the School, and it has proven to be a great asset to have those older students serve as role models for the little ones.

We partner our students—a returning Superstar and a new Superstar—so the little ones always know they have somebody that they can look to and the big ones know that it is their responsibility to care for them. They help any time something new happens, whether it's learning how to do your rest time jobs at the beginning of the year, or "the magic coat trick," or our rituals when we go to the park, like where our safety check-in spot is. The older students have check-in sentences that they have to ask their partner at the park: "Are you safe? Are you having fun?" After that they can go play again.

Like all of our Preschool classrooms, the Superstars have their own unique traditions—phrases and sayings and events—things that make us feel like a family unit. Having that kind of trademark, being able to say this is how the Superstars do it, creates a real identity and

sense of belonging. Each classroom functions that way and builds that family dynamic. That then becomes the legacy, because next year those younger kids will become the veterans, and they will help to shepherd in a whole new crop of students.

### Continuity of Care

The other important part of grouping the three- and four-year-olds, and what really makes it so successful, is the Continuity of Care approach, which we have been doing for over a decade. With the students staying for two years in the same environment, with the same classmates, it is so conducive to building relationships with the kids. This leads to an increased comfort level for the children; having that secure attachment and knowing what the expectations are helps them to develop in so many important ways, academically and socially. It is also very helpful for us because we know exactly where the students are developmentally and what they are working on, so we can really hit the ground running at the beginning of their second school year.

The Continuity of Care model allows us to deepen our relationships with the families as well. If you think about it, by the end of the second year we have literally spent half their lives with the kids—it is such an awesome responsibility for parents to trust us with their most important treasures! We work hard to make sure that parents feel comfortable and safe and secure in addition to their children feeling safe and secure. We host a lot of events inside and outside the classroom, during the school day as well as some evenings. We also communicate regularly online and make a lot of "touch base" phone calls, especially in the beginning of the year to talk about anything they may be feeling uneasy or worried about.

Liz Cummins (top) and Georgia Hawkins (bottom) working with some of this year's Superstars.







# ACADEMICS

As part of our Preschool Philosophy, we believe that play is the foundation for academic learning. It is a very organized and structured play-based program, designed to meet the needs, interests, and abilities of each child.



We take very seriously the importance of building that relationship with the parents because it is the foundation of moving forward; the preschool teachers are, in a sense, the initial ambassadors for the FXW experience. Parents believe and trust that we have their children's best interests at heart, not only their education but also their safety and their social-emotional well-being. We make sure that they know that this is a safe place, that this is a loving place, that this is a nurturing place. Building that relationship with parents is as important as building the relationship with the kids. And many times, we are able to welcome younger siblings into our classroom, so we already have that preexisting relationship with the family and that then becomes even deeper and stronger.

## Academic Preparation

As part of our Preschool Philosophy, we believe that play is the foundation for academic learning. It is a very organized and structured play-based program, designed to meet the needs, interests, and abilities of each child.

Even though we are all in the same classroom, we have different expectations for each child, socially and academically. It is important to know that everything that we do in the classroom is intentional, every activity we put out, everything we plan, every partnership, every group placement, everything is intentional with each specific child's goal in mind. It may look like they are "just playing," but actually we have this student working at the fine-motor table because his finger muscles need to be stronger before he is ready to write, and this student needs to work on her core strength, so we will direct her toward that activity.

One way we "direct" students toward a particular skill is through our table-top activities, which are part of our regular morning routine. A group will work on an activity for ten to fifteen minutes each day. One day it might be a fine-motor activity, and the next day it could be art or a block-building or math activity, and the day after some sort of sensory-based activity. We do this because we noticed that certain students were avoiding different things, so this ensures that every week they are getting at least fifteen minutes of practice in something that they otherwise would not choose. It also helps us to determine whether that avoidance was simply because they were busy doing something else, or because that activity is difficult for them. If it's the latter, then we can work one-on-one with the child to build that skill, and because it's only for a limited time each week it feels more manageable and not so overwhelming for the child.



One of the skills that we focus on a great deal is phonemic awareness, which is the ability to hear individual sounds in words and then manipulate those sounds, pull them apart and put them together. First the students need to be able to hear the sounds, and then later they will be able to manipulate them in reading and writing. We work on this skill informally throughout the day through conversations and stories and reading. For example, one of the things we always say is, "Okay, friends, it's such-and-such time, we want everybody to stop and check in with your body. Ask your body, 'body, do I need to go potty?'" Then we will immediately say "Oh! Body, potty—those words rhyme." We reinforce that every single time, so quickly all 20 kids will say "body, potty, those words rhyme!" We do that same sort of reinforcement when we are reading stories. We also do more formal large group exposure to phonemic awareness for about ten minutes each day. We sing the ABC song, we do a different Mother Goose rhyme each week, and we talk about beginning sounds or rhyming or segmenting and blending. The goal is when they are three, they will gain exposure to these things through the large group experience, and then when they are four there will be a greater understanding, which we can then expand upon through individualized work.

Math is another large group activity each day. Again, we are striving for exposure for the little ones, and a little more practice for the four-year-olds. We talk about the concepts of some and none, and more and less; we do a lot of comparing numbers. We also spend a week on each number and talk about what it looks like in a multitude of forms. We do 10-frames and tally marks, we talk about the numbers that are before and after, and we practice subitizing, which is the ability to look at a group and know automatically how many there are, for example pips on a die. We also might ask them to recognize the numbers in their bodies, like things on our body that we have two of, or things that we can do in twos, like two hops or two spins. We try to make it really engaging and show them numbers all around them and the different ways that numbers exist in our world.

## FXW PRESCHOOL: PHILOSOPHY & FACTS

Our **Philosophy** is to facilitate learning in developmentally appropriate ways. We believe in:

- **play** as the foundation for academic learning
- strong **social and emotional health** with an emphasis on relationships, self-regulation and initiative
- nurturing **optimism and happiness** in the classroom, increasing empathy and compassion, while resolving peer conflicts in schools
- the **process** of learning rather than the product
- teaching **critical thinking skills** through discussing, questioning and exploring
- providing **choices** to foster motivation to learn
- building body awareness by strengthening **gross motor** and **fine motor** muscles
- supporting the religious and spiritual **faith** of all children through prayer and music
- encouraging **self-help skills** to build independence and pride
- **partnering with parents** to support and nurture their child rearing efforts
- **child readiness** for learning with sensitivity to individual differences and needs

### Some other Facts about Preschool at FXW:

- It is a **two-year program** made up of students who have turned three or four by August 31
- We follow the **Continuity of Care** learning model, which means that, with rare exceptions, students remain in the same classroom with the same classmates for both years
- There are **multiple scheduling options** (half day and full day, partial week and full week)
- Each class is co-taught by **two teachers**, with a student-teacher ratio of 10:1
- Every classroom follows the same approach and philosophy, while also ensuring that the **individual needs** of each student in their classroom are met
- There is a strong sense of **community** among students, teachers, and parents within each classroom, including a unique name for each room (which this year includes Bunnies, Darling Donuts, Eco Kids, Ladybugs, Silly Kitties, Superstars, Sweetpeas, and Terrific Tigers)
- We follow **NAEYC guidelines** (National Association for the Education of Young Children) and the **Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards**

# ACADEMICS

## OTHER COMPONENTS

In addition to all of the activities led by the classroom teachers, our Preschool students also participate in art, drama, library, music, physical education, and Spanish. These are taught by specialists in each field and, in addition to the subject matter, give the students exposure to more teachers and teaching styles.

Since its installation in 2007, the Imagination Station has been one of the favorite “specials” for FXW preschoolers. Designed to echo architectural elements of Chicago, the Imagination Station and other physical education activities are directed by Marvin McCurry, who is in his twenty-fourth year at FXW. Students visit the Imagination Station in groups of ten for twenty minutes each day, and they work on developing gross motor skills that are important not only for their physical development but also their academic readiness.

Under Mr. McCurry’s leadership, the students play and have fun, but also learn to help one another and resolve conflicts in a friendly, respectful way, thus deepening the sense of community within the group. Asked for his primary goal for the children, Mr. McCurry says, “to learn new skills and gain confidence, but above all, to try.” Working with the students, he adds, “keeps me getting up every day,” and it warms his heart when his former students come back to visit him in the Imagination Station. “When I’m not here, I feel like I’m missing something.”

Our four-year-olds typically do an individualized activity in the afternoon that we call “buckets.” Each bucket is different, so a bucket that we pull for Mary might be different than a bucket we pull for Tommy because they have different needs, and we want to make sure that they each are getting the skills that they need most at that specific point. We’ll have a week of language arts buckets—rhyming, beginning sounds, compound words, blending, segmenting, that sort of thing. The next week might be math buckets, things like shapes, numbers, or sorting. At one end, we might have somebody sorting beads by color, and then at the more advanced end there might be a group of fifteen items and the student is asked to group them in sets of three.

The idea behind buckets, for us, is really building academic readiness skills, and not so much the academic skills themselves. They learn how to attack the problem independently: getting the pieces to the table without losing any, sitting down, looking, and thinking, “Okay, what does the teacher want me to do? Can I use problem-solving skills? Can I apply what I did with the last bucket to this bucket? How is it the same and how is it different? What skills am I going to use here to solve this problem? At what point do I need to ask somebody at my table if maybe they know how I could solve this problem? When do I need to call the teacher in for help?” They also raise their hand and ask a teacher to check their work, so it’s a great way for them to practice patience and then, when we come to them, to also learn how to explain their thinking. These are all important skills that they will need down the road, so we start to practice them now.

So much of this bucket work, and our academic preparation in general, is designed to build the students’ independence and confidence in their ability. Independence and self-help skills are such important building blocks of academic readiness. We also work on this by giving them the responsibility of doing their own jobs, being responsible for not only themselves but also the classroom community, taking care of items and helping to get things done. All of these approaches help a student to be able to look at a problem

**Marvin McCurry has been a part of FXW for twenty-four years.**





## The goal with this, and with everything we do, is to nurture happiness and a love of learning.

and then attack it in an age-appropriate way.

### Social-Emotional Skills

Building social-emotional skills is absolutely the most important part of our job; we work on it constantly, from the beginning of the day until the end.

In addition to helping students solve problems, we also model how to solve a problem through our interactions with each other. We also use specific, consistent language with the children. For example, one of the phrases that we use all the time is, "Can I use that when you're done?" and the answer always must be "yes" because when they're finished, they're finished. Teaching them that language is so helpful because it lets the child know that eventually this is going to be mine, so I do not have to worry. We follow that with the next important question—what are you going to do while you wait?—which ensures that they are not perseverating on that one item or idea and that they are able to use their time wisely and enjoy themselves. Shifting that language from "You have to share" really made a huge difference in our classroom, because sharing implies that I have something and you want it, and I must give it to you. That doesn't make me feel very good—it takes my power away, and kids so desperately want power and choice, and we must help them to feel that and experience that.

In terms of conflict-resolution, we teach the students to tell one another when they don't like something. We do a lot of modeling and scaffolding for them at first, but after a few months, they learn how to say it on their own—"that was too rough," or "I didn't like it when..." Learning how to stand up for themselves and use language rather than being physical is so important, and it is also important for the other person to learn how to stand there and stop what they're doing, to listen to that friend and practice looking them in the eye, and develop a socially responsible response. We do not force them to apologize, but we do want them to respond in some way. "Okay, thanks for letting me know. I'll be more gentle, I didn't realize"—some way of

acknowledging that they did hear their friend. That is an equally important skill.

Another important phrase that we use a lot in our classroom is, "Everybody's working on something." As humans, we are all flawed in some way, and everybody is working on improving—Mrs. Cummins is working on something, Mrs. Hawkins is working on something, your parents are working on something. These are our goals, and there's nothing to be ashamed of in our goals. We all know one another's goals, we all know what each other is working on, and we all help each other as we try to reach these goals. How do we support and build up our friends when they are facing something that is difficult for them? That is powerful.

We have also had a lot of success with the MindUP program which, among other things, teaches the children how to use breathing to control their emotions. We practice that twice a day; doing it when they are calm helps them to remember to rely on it when they are feeling emotional. The kids are fascinated about the science behind the brain and learning the different ways that they can "train their brain" through things like mindful breathing and taking a step back. We also do a project on feelings to talk about strategies that we can use that help us when we have "hard" feelings. We try not to use the words "good" or "bad" to describe feelings. We typically frame them as "easy" or "hard" feelings because all feelings are okay, but all feelings also come and go, and we reassure them that this "hard" feeling is not going to last forever, I will be able to experience "easy" feelings again.

The goal with this, and with everything we do, is to nurture happiness and a love of learning. All Preschool teachers want our students to thoroughly enjoy their time with us and to be fully prepared for the next steps in their FXW journey and beyond. That is our purpose and our passion. ■

## MISSION DRIVEN

**A**cademic development and preparation are key elements of the Preschool Program, but from the very beginning the students also experience in very tangible ways the other main pillars of the FXW experience: diversity and inclusion, faith, and service.

The Admissions Department works hard to ensure that the rich diversity—in all its forms—that is present throughout the School is also reflected in each Preschool classroom, and the teachers reinforce the importance and value of an **inclusive community**. Preschool students of all faiths participate in **special prayer services** designed specifically for them and join together for religious education, which includes prayer and meditation practices. There are a variety of service opportunities for the preschoolers and their parents, and all of the students participate at least twice a year in our **Blessings in a Backpack** program (pictured below), which provides essential weekend food items for 185 families at our partner school, Maternity BVM.

Each of these elements of the FXW mission also provide multiple opportunities for parents to become involved in and enrich the life of the School.



## FERTILIZING THE SOIL: "ACQUIRING" SPANISH

Unlike most schools, FXW students begin Spanish instruction in Preschool; acquiring a second language is, in our view, an integral part of a well-rounded education. Students continue with the World Language program throughout their time at the School, choosing in 5th grade whether to continue with Spanish or switch to French. We look forward to profiling our French program in the Spring issue of *Charism Magazine*.

OSP Spanish teachers Jazmine Romero-Rojas and Paul Minarik recently discussed the theory, approach, and goals of the World Language program for our younger students. Ms. Romero-Rojas started at FXW in 2013 as an Extended Day teacher and then became our 1st through 3rd grade Spanish teacher at the beginning of the 2017–2018 school year. Mr. Minarik joined the faculty last year, coming from the Archdiocese of Chicago, where he taught Spanish and computer science at a number of schools; at FXW he teaches Spanish to our Preschool and Kindergarten students.

**JAZMINE:** The focus of our World Language program is on acquisition-driven instruction, which is based on The Theory of Second Language Acquisition from the 1980s developed by Steven Krashen, a linguist at University of South California. The focus is not so much on teaching the language in a traditional academic sense; we are looking for the students to really acquire the language, to become lifelong learners.

**PAUL:** Exactly right. We let go of the idea that today we will memorize our numbers from one to ten and tomorrow we will learn how to say 40 sea animals in Spanish. Because unless they become marine biologists in Peru, they will never use that, and even then by the time they do they will have forgotten everything except maybe *tortuga*. The metaphor that I like to use is that this is early spring in their language acquisition. What Jazmine and I are doing is fertilizing the soil, nourishing those little plants and giving them lots and lots of love and the ability to grow.

**JAZMINE:** Yes, at this level we focus much more on input than output. The idea is that our young students need to be exposed to a lot of Spanish, through listening and reading in a variety of ways—they need a lot of input before they are prepared to produce the output. And the key for us is that this input must be comprehensible, and not just interesting but also compelling. This Second Language Acquisition Theory, which is central to acquisition-driven instruction, is at the heart of everything we do.

**PAUL:** We have learned that the two most important factors for comprehensible input are (1) keeping the language “in bounds,” and (2) making the input as personal as possible for the students. For that first factor, keeping the language in bounds, we purposely chop away as much vocabulary as we can. We keep our vocabulary streamlined so our students are hearing the same words and the same verb structures over and over again until they just get it, it’s just there. We do not have the luxury of having hours upon hours with these kids, so we have to keep our vocabulary intensely focused.

**JAZMINE:** As Paul said, we need to provide so much repetition. Studies show that for a person to remember a word, it needs to be repeated anywhere between 70 and 120 times. So for us, we need to be sure that we provide that constant repetition. To do this, we look at very high frequency verbs. We focus on the “super seven” and “super sixteen” verbs. These are the verbs that are central to communication at any level in any language—what do you want, what do you like, where do you want to go, and so on; very basic, fundamental words.

**PAUL:** In terms of making it as personal as possible for the students, that’s one of our major goals. One thing I do is have capitanes—captains—of the class every day. There are two of them, and they help me do different jobs and move the kids around, and at certain times they are the only ones who can speak. Recently, in one of my Kindergarten classes I asked one of the capitanes, in Spanish, How are you? And she said, in Spanish, I’m sad. Why are you sad? I asked her, still in Spanish. She answered me in English with a long story about all the things that had gone wrong that morning. I then repeated back those things,

Paul Minarik with *la guitarra*.





I keep coming back to making sure the kids are engaged and having fun—if we are doing our job, then the kids are enjoying the class.



Storytelling and reading are a critical part of the Spanish curriculum.

in Spanish, and added a little humor around the unfairness of it all. The other students were completely captivated because this story made sense to them, it was relatable, and my little capitán was thrilled—this story is all about me! It was totally fine that she answered in part in English; the point is not for her, in Kindergarten, to speak to me in complex Spanish sentences. What Jazmine and I are looking for, and what makes us feel good, is that the students and I were communicating, and for most of that—for me entirely—it was in Spanish.

**JAZMINE:** One of the projects that I do with my 2nd and 3rd graders are “special person interviews.” To get ready, they fill out and decorate an “all about me” form, and then I have them sit in a special chair with a crown and scepter and I ask them questions in the target language. I also look around the room and see who’s connecting to the conversation and call on them too. What they don’t realize is, I have been asking them variations of these same questions since Day One all in the target language. It’s all about getting as many repetitions as possible and personalizing it as much as possible, so that it becomes second nature for them.

**PAUL:** That is such an important point. One of the strategies that we use under this large umbrella of comprehensible input is called TPRS, Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling. The idea is that books and

stories create this great context for these commonly-used words and phrases, and by having the students engage with the books and help create the stories, you provide the personalization that makes this all so compelling for them. Our predecessors had introduced the idea of TPRS to FXW, and when Jazmine and I were hired, the administration was really excited about this concept and encouraged us to attend conferences and learn more about it.

**JAZMINE:** It makes so much sense. You can speak Spanish all you want in the class, but if the kids are not following along they are not going to absorb it, then they will start to check out, and all sorts of other issues will arise from there. So storytelling and reading are such an important part of what we do because the students enjoy it and are able to understand and in many cases shape what is going on. We focus a lot on reading, building the ability to read a novel, a chapter book, completely in Spanish.

**PAUL:** With my classes, because my students are either preliterate or emerging readers, it’s all about keeping things fun, and having them engage in storytelling is such an effective way to do that. And in all these stories that they read and hear, there’s that same language that we are focusing on, because that’s what stories are about—how do kids feel, where do they want to go, what’s their name, how old are they.

**JAZMINE:** Paul and I have been so excited to see how captivating these methods have been for the students. When they came back at the beginning of this school year, the amount of things they were still able to retain over the summer was incredible. So for us, that was a total buy in, and made us want to learn and use TPRS even more. Another technique that we use a lot is called Total Physical Response, or TPR. It is important for the kids to do some actual moving around. If there are some particular words that we are revealing, like wants and likes, I want to make sure they develop motions and gestures for them. Sometimes students might not be able

to remember how to say a word, but they can do the gesture, which just means they are in the process of acquiring that particular target structure. They just need more input, they need more hearing, and the gestures and movement provide a bridge for that.

**PAUL:** It is so important to remember that these kids want to be able to communicate. It’s natural—humans are hard-wired to communicate. If you think about, you don’t send babies to English class to learn the language; you just talk to them. And they’re desperate to talk to you, and eventually they do. It’s the same thing with our students, so we are giving them every possible opportunity to do that.

**JAZMINE:** That’s exactly it—we don’t memorize lists of words or practice pronunciation; we give them opportunities to use the language. And we try to provide as much meaningful context for that as possible. Part of developing this engagement is personalizing questions, stories, music, drawings and everything else we do in class. Class is about them and we use their likes, interests, stories about their daily lives to guide what we do every day in class.

**PAUL:** I keep coming back to making sure the kids are engaged and having fun—if we are doing our job, then the kids are enjoying the class. For my students, I love to use *la guitarra*. I think music is so powerful. We still remember lyrics to songs that we heard when we were young—that’s the power of music. So I write goofy songs that use this “in bounds” language that we are emphasizing as another way to give us more hits on those basic, fundamental words. Plus, when there’s music and everyone is singing, your guard is let down; there’s no spotlight on you, you’re just part of the chorus, and the kids are eager participants. I also use my *mochila*—backpack—and have objects pop out of that. That’s another way to make language comprehensible, by physically showing the kids what you’re talking about. When I say *pelota* and make a circle with my hands, the kids are like, What is he talking about? But if I hold a ball in my





Jazmine Romero-Rojas handing out acting and production roles for a storytelling project.

hand and say “pelota,” they know instinctively. Oh, that’s a pelota. After one or two classes, they know that if a ball comes out, it’s a pelota. And the mochila, even though they say “backpack” at the beginning, they quickly start to say “mochila.” That’s another aspect of TPR, keeping things physical and very comprehensible.

**JAZMINE:** I also use a lot of music, and we do role-playing with puppets and other props. The students also act out the stories and come up with solutions or different outcomes. For my younger students, I sprinkle them with “pixie dust” to help them to read, which makes things magical and engaging for them. They don’t know that they are acquiring a language because they are having so much fun!

**PAUL:** When we go to these conferences of language teachers, that’s when it really sinks in that we are one of a small minority of schools that offer a robust language program to kids starting at three years old. And among those that do, we are one of an even smaller minority that actually takes it seriously, where the school

invests in us, sending us to these conferences, figuring out how best to work with these young developing minds. Before FXW, I thought I was a pretty good Spanish teacher. But I can guarantee you that my teaching was not nearly as effective as it is now. I am so much more purposeful in my approach. Having said that, though, we do operate within a time constraint—we have essentially 35 hours with the students every year. Compared to a home environment where Spanish is spoken, that is essentially four days. But that’s way more than most kids this age get, and it’s another reason why we need to be as purposeful as possible and have realistic goals about what our students can do.

**JAZMINE:** And we are constantly looking for ways to make our program even stronger and better meet the needs of all of our students.

**PAUL:** Yes! We are very excited about what we have been able to do and look forward to doing even more. We really believe that the World Language program has a very bright future at FXW. ■

## World Language Philosophy Statement:

At The Frances Xavier Warde School, we believe that learning a second language helps students reflect on their own unique life experiences, which in turn leads to being better able to compare and connect these experiences with those of other people around the world. We set language goals that are both developmentally appropriate and realistic. We believe that exposure to a second language is an integral part of a well-rounded education. ■

## WHAT FXW MEANS TO THE FRANKLIN FAMILY

by Terri Franklin

Terri Franklin and her husband John are the parents of three FXW alumni: John ("Johnny"), a member of the Class of 2010, Gregory '12, and Ashley '16. Here she reflects on their experiences at FXW and the ways in which those experiences laid the foundation for their future successes.

The School does such a great job of meeting students where they are, and then helping each of them to get to the next level.

My husband John and I are quite often humbled and astonished by what our three children have accomplished. We are very proud that Johnny will be coming back to FXW in the spring to speak with students and parents [see sidebar on page 25]. But the thing is, his successes are not unprecedented. Our son Gregory, a junior at Amherst College, and our daughter Ashley, a junior at Jones College Prep, have also done very well academically, athletically, and artistically. And so have so many of their classmates and friends from FXW, each following their own path. How does this happen?

I do not claim to be a parenting authority, and I certainly do not have any magic formulas or secret potions that will ensure success for our children. But I am happy to look back at our family's experiences at FXW and, with the benefit of hindsight, identify those aspects and characteristics that were so important for so many families.

### Academics

The first thing I will note is the academic approach at FXW. When I am around parents of younger children today, so much of the talk seems to be about test scores and which schools are the most prestigious. But FXW never fostered that sort of pressure. The School does such a great job of meeting students where they are, and then helping each of them to get to the next level. Johnny's teachers recognized his academic abilities early on and they worked hard to make sure that he was always challenged and never bored. The teachers also made sure that students did not share their test grades or their grades on various assignments. They emphasized that testing and scores are just a small part of your life and that no one should be valued or measured based on those numbers.

I also felt that the FXW teachers did a great job highlighting the fact that everyone is good at something—math or poetry or art, or whatever it happens to be. They then celebrated those talents and gave each child the opportunity to shine in his or her own unique way. That was very important and it helped the kids to gain so much self-confidence.

**There was a real partnership with the teachers.** That was probably most evident in the extraordinary lines of communication between us. I always felt that I could pick up the phone at any time and call any of my kids' teachers to ask a question or express a concern, and they often sent me an email or talked to me about something that they noticed. The back-to-school nights and conferences were also very helpful, as well as the workshops that they had to explain things like the math curriculum. We always felt like we were working together on the same team to do what was best for the children.

The arts have always been such a big part of the FXW curriculum, and that is something that I appreciated very much. Gregory was very involved in theater inside and outside of school, and Ashley is very musical and now sings with the Chicago Children's Choir. But, once again, it was not about how talented you were, but rather that every child had the opportunity to express creativity. I was involved in a project at school where we visited the Art Institute and studied a famous work of art, and then we went back into the classroom and each child offered his or her own interpretation of that piece. It was such a tangible statement that, especially in art, there is no right or wrong, and that **each person's voice matters.**

FXW alumni Gregory, Ashley, and John Franklin.





## Life Skills

My children's experiences with Li'l Buds Theatre, and all of the other opportunities they had to be on stage or in front of an audience, were crucial as well. That ability to speak with confidence in front of a group—that is just so important, and it began and was fostered through all those experiences at FXW. They also learned time management and other executive functioning skills that have served them so well in high school and now, for my boys, in college and beyond.

I also felt like the teachers did a great job fostering a sense of independence in the kids. There was always the expectation that if you had a problem with homework or did not understand something, it was the student's responsibility to let the teacher know. That required a certain level of trust among all parties concerned, and it also forced the students to problem solve. As a result, **FXW kids as a whole are such great self-advocates.** So when they get to high school, there might be a little difficulty while they adjust to a new environment, but with their academic background and all of the other skills they have learned, they are fully prepared to thrive.

Johnny is, I think, a real testament to that. He always did well academically and by now has great STEM experience and skills. But he also has a lot of compassion. He is just so positive, he is understanding, he listens, and he is a good teammate. He credits FXW for all of those things—the School really started him along the right path. There was an article in the Washington Post recently [see sidebar on page 25] about what Google has learned about successful teams in the workplace. They realize now that all of those "soft skills" are so much more important than the technical abilities, and that is why Johnny has thrived there.

## Community

Another important piece of the puzzle is the amazing community that is so central to the FXW experience. My kids were exposed to different cultures and learned about people of all sorts of different backgrounds and faiths, and not just through a history book or in some isolated unit in the classroom. They lived it and experienced it every day. Those were their friends, the people they grew up with; they became their extended family.

All of those differences were honored and celebrated; there was no effort to make everyone "the same." For several years, we had an International Festival which was wonderful, and of course every year at the Holiday Program, students sang songs from different traditions from all over the world. There were lots and lots of things like that. Everyone was unique; no one was "less than" because they were somehow different. **That was their normal,** and I know that growing up in that diverse community has served my kids so well.

There was also always so much group work at FXW, and that led to a spirit of collaboration that became ingrained in the kids' way of doing things; it is now so natural for them. And being part of such a diverse community, you learn how to work well with people from different backgrounds, perspectives, and life experiences. That is a key part of the FXW experience and it is such an important skill to have later in life.

That tight-knit community extended to the parents too. We were encouraged to get involved and to really get to know the teachers and other parents. The parent socials were always wonderful, as were things like the Gala; that really built that sense of community. Even things like the pick-up line became a place for social interaction with other parents. We would get in each other's cars while we waited for dismissal and just talk and talk—that was one of the real joys of my time at FXW. And of course we knew that we had each other's backs and could always turn to someone for advice or for a favor, and help was always there when things were challenging. **We were family.**

## Balance

My final piece of advice is to try to find a good balance for your children. We all want the best for our kids and want them to be successful, and this unfortunately sometimes leads to social-engineering or helicopter parenting. We always tried to emphasize finding a good academic/social balance. It is just as important to me that my children have a healthy social environment as it is for them to get all A's and B's. If they get a B, maybe a C, and they have a healthy social environment, I am fine with that, because that to me is what life is about, that balance.

Johnny, Gregory, and Ashley all were involved in activities outside the classroom—athletics, the arts, Student Council. We have to let our kids explore their own interests, and we also have to remember that those will be different for each child. And, as hard as it sometimes is, we have to let them make mistakes. That's where being in this amazing school community is so helpful, because **FXW makes each child feel like success is possible.** They are happy and have a great experience while they are at FXW, and they are fully prepared for the next steps after graduation. That is all a parent could ever want. ■

My kids were exposed to different cultures and learned about people of all sorts of different backgrounds and faiths, and not just through a history book or in some isolated unit in the classroom.



**Last spring**, Microsoft Corporation invited 120 college students from around the world to VHacks, the first-ever student hackathon hosted in Vatican City. They represented 60 different universities in 28 countries, and FXW alumnus Johnny Franklin, then a student at Northwestern University, was one of the students selected to attend. The students were challenged to tackle some of the most difficult issues of our time, such as social inclusion, interfaith dialogue, and aiding migrants and refugees through cutting-edge tech like Artificial Intelligence and Mixed Reality.

At the Vatican, Franklin's VHacks team worked tirelessly to develop an app for Microsoft that reunites lost refugees with their families and friends. The team hopes to work with refugee camps, so that a parent can use facial recognition to cross-reference a photo of his or her child with a database to determine whether that child has been located anywhere in the world.

In reflecting about this initiative, Johnny stated, "The incentive isn't money. The incentive isn't pride. It's really just doing it for someone else to improve their lives."

Johnny graduated from Northwestern in June and was selected as the School of Engineering's Co-op Student of the Year. He interned at Pixar Studios this summer and will soon begin full-time employment with Google, having interned for them in previous summers. He also intends to see where and how his Microsoft VHack team's project can benefit refugees around the world.

We are very excited to welcome John Franklin back to campus on **Tuesday, April 16, 2019** as the first alum to be featured as part of the *Maggie Daley Speaker Series*. Johnny will speak with parents at 8:30 a.m. in the HNC Auditorium and then will address the middle school student body later in the day.



The Franklin family: John, Gregory, Ashley, Terri, and John.

## "The surprising thing Google learned about its employees—and what it means for today's students," *Washington Post*, December 20, 2017:

"The conventional wisdom about 21st century skills holds that students need to master the STEM subjects—science, technology, engineering and math—and learn to code as well because that's where the jobs are. It turns out that is a gross simplification of what students need to know and be able to do, and some proof for that comes from a surprising source: Google.

Sergey Brin and Larry Page, both brilliant computer scientists, founded their company on the conviction that only technologists can understand technology. Google originally set its hiring algorithms to sort for computer science students with top grades from elite science universities.

In 2013, Google decided to test its hiring hypothesis by crunching every bit and byte of hiring, firing, and promotion data accumulated since the company's incorporation in 1998. Project Oxygen shocked everyone by concluding that, among the eight most important qualities of Google's top employees, STEM expertise comes in dead last. The seven top characteristics of success at Google are all soft skills: being a good coach; communicating and listening well; possessing insights into others (including others' different values and points of view); having empathy toward and being supportive of one's colleagues; being a good critical thinker and problem solver; and being able to make connections across complex ideas.

Project Aristotle, a study released by Google this past spring, further supports the importance of soft skills even in high-tech environments. Project Aristotle shows that the best teams at Google exhibit a range of soft skills: equality, generosity, curiosity toward the ideas of your teammates, empathy, and emotional intelligence. And topping the list: emotional safety. No bullying. To succeed, each and every team member must feel confident speaking up and making mistakes. They must know they are being heard."

## ALUMNAE IN THE CLASSROOM: A conversation with Sandy Morales and Francesca Palmer

Sandy Morales graduated from FXW in 2002 and returned in the fall of 2017 to teach Spanish to our 5th through 8th grade students. Francesca Palmer graduated from FXW in 2005; she joined our Preschool Program as a teacher at the beginning of this school year.

**You graduated from FXW and now you're back as a teacher. What led you back to the FXW community?**

**FRANCESCA:** It was always my dream to work at FXW because I thought it was the best place. It ingrained in me how much I love education because I had such a great experience here. I became a teacher because the teachers here were so patient, so loving, and so compassionate that I said, "I want to do that!" After I graduated from Miami of Ohio, I served in the Peace Corps in Malawi for two years. Then I came back to Chicago and worked at a couple of different schools. But I always had FXW in the back of my mind. Even when I was in the Peace Corps **I carried a piece of FXW with me, that idea of service, connections, and family.** I was lucky enough that a full-time position opened up here, and I'm so happy to be back! When I look back at my life, I remember high school, of course, but I really remember grade school. It made an impact. I'm a die-hard FXW fan.

**SANDY:** After I graduated from FXW, I went to Latin for high school then on to Valparaiso for college. At Valpo, I did a lot of work with tutoring and mentoring programs with local students. I don't know why I did not think to major in education, but instead I double majored in psychology and Spanish. But I always had the intention of working with children in some way. After I graduated I worked at a dental office for three years, specifically with children, before I landed my first teaching job at an independent school in the South Loop. My bus route home from that school would go right past FXW, and I would always think about the fond memories I had here. Every time I passed, I would think to myself, "I want to teach there someday." Like Francesca, I would think about all the FXW teachers I admired and tried to model the way they taught. Then a Spanish position opened in the middle school here last year, and I love working with that age group—it was perfect timing!



(above) Francesca Palmer sitting on the lap of her FXW Preschool teacher Beth Amatangelo; (opposite) Francesca and Beth, now colleagues at FXW.

**Now that you're back in the classroom, what is it like being a teacher here?**

**SANDY:** I feel like I'm at home here. FXW still takes care of me as a teacher—the School did not stop fostering my academic career when I graduated. That's because of the amazing culture of the staff here; I don't get special treatment because I'm an alumna! As an alum teacher, though, it's fun to relate my FXW experiences with my students' experiences. They'll ask me, "Ms. Morales, did you ever do this when you were here?" It's nice to connect with my students in that way, because I can honestly say, Yes, I have been there. I also really want to make sure I show my students, especially students of color, that **I am a face for what they can see themselves becoming.** I want them to see those diverse stories of a teacher of color, something that was not common when I was a student. The majority of their lives are spent at school, and if they can relate to someone, I feel that it is really important to be that person.

**FRANCESCA:** I totally agree with Sandy. FXW feels so natural—it's like I am home. I don't have to leave anything at the door, I can just be myself. I do feel a sense of protection because I went here—the other teachers look out for me. But the staff here are so nice and helpful to everybody. That's just how they are, everyone is always on your side. They root for you, and they are there for you. That's something I really love about FXW. It feels like people are always on your team.



## WHY I TEACH





# WHY I TEACH







(opposite) FXW colleagues Brigid Cashman and Sandy Morales; (above) Sandy's self-portrait, which she did as an FXW 8th grader, now hangs in Brigid's classroom.

**Both of you mentioned how your FXW teachers shaped your teaching philosophy. Can you give an example of how a specific incident or teacher impacts your teaching today?**

**FRANCESCA:** In 3rd grade I wrote in a reflection journal about how someone made fun of my teeth and that it really hurt my feelings. My teacher, Ms. Jones, read what I wrote and talked to me privately. **She made me feel like my feelings mattered, my words mattered.** Now as a teacher, if a student is upset about something, I stop, I look, and I listen to what's happening. I believe that no matter how big or little a situation seems, nothing should be minimized. Ms. Jones could have told me to "get over it," but instead she made the effort to sit down and ask me how I was feeling. I really liked that—and it obviously stuck with me—so I try to do that for my students as well. Nothing is "no big deal;" I do not like that expression. Different things are "big deals" to different people, and as Ms. Jones showed me, you have to be sensitive to everyone's feelings and needs.

**SANDY:** I had a teacher for math, Ms. Jacobson, who was so organized and had such high expectations for us. When you walked into her class, everyone was serious; not in a scared way, but because "this is the time to focus because this is what she expects from us." She showed us that **a work ethic is a cool thing to have** and that being serious about academics is not nerdy. So that's what I try to emulate. I introduce myself to my students completely in Spanish, so they know I am serious. I always want to make sure they have high expectations in the same way Ms. Jacobson had high expectations for me and all her students.

**How do you live out the FXW values in the classroom?**

**SANDY:** One of the main focuses in my classroom is the FXW value of being really intentionally inclusive so that no one feels left out. During the first days of the school year, I make sure that every student knows my classroom is a safe place to speak up and make mistakes. Throughout the year, if someone laughs at a classmate's pronunciation or an error that someone made, I remind them that they are not following my absolute most important rule. In my classroom, we never treat anyone as "less than" just because they got an answer wrong. **I want all my students to feel safe and to have a feeling of success.** I try to foster that "I just did that!" feeling, even if it's for something small. Not everyone is naturally good at everything, but we can all improve. If I am struggling with science, for example, but my teacher makes me feel like I can do it, then I am going to be motivated to work hard and do better. I want to make sure my students feel that.

**FRANCESCA:** There are many pieces to a child, and I always look at a child as a whole and not just where they might be academically. I am always thinking about what's going on with a student: where they come from, what their family life is like, what their background is, and I try to be sensitive to all of that. It is so much more than learning the ABCs; **we are helping to develop children in fundamental, transformative ways.** When I was a student at FXW, I loved the closeness and coziness of my classroom. I could be myself in the classroom; I could have a voice, and I could speak up. So, like Sandy, I try to create an environment where our classroom feels like a team and that we are all a family. Everyone is welcome and everyone is included. Those interpersonal skills and foundational life skills, and that feeling of belonging, will serve my students forever. ■

# WHY I TEACH

At the beginning of the school year, we asked our faculty to respond to the prompt, "Why I Teach." Here are some of the responses that we received, with the year that the teacher began at FXW indicated in parentheses.



**Tiara Damper (2017);  
6th Grade Small Group Math:**

I teach because it is my passion. There is nothing else I would rather do; I feel that I was put on this earth to fulfill that role. I teach because I have a desire to share ideas, communicate concepts and inspire conversation with the people around me.



**Malinda Glenn (2002); Preschool:**

Teaching Preschool is a passion of mine. I believe it is important to build a strong foundation for children to love learning. I understand that this learning begins at home and that families then entrust their children to us.

I love the opportunity to welcome families to FXW and partner with them. This partnership builds a sense of community, which then grows to become an extension of my family. Children sense this devotion and in turn begin appreciating, valuing, and loving school. I love teaching and learning together with my students and creating an environment that encourages them to be cooperative, creative, open minded, and innovative. I teach because I want to make a difference in my students' lives and want to inspire them to be lifetime learners.

# WHY I



**Brooke O'Rourke (2007);  
Speech-Language Pathologist:**

I became a Speech-Language Pathologist in the educational system because I get to be creative! Because each client is NEVER like the one before, I am always using my creative juices to keep therapy interesting, motivating, and beneficial. But hands down the best part of the job is knowing you are impacting a child's life....forever. Whether it is teaching a child how to say an /r/, follow directions, understand non verbal social cues, or speak without stuttering, knowing that my interventions are helping a child communicate and that those skills will help them their whole life is the very reason I do what I do.



**Brittany Haracz (2015); 7th grade  
English & Language Arts:**

I teach because I believe in the power of student voices. I truly believe that through reading and writing, students can impact our school, society, and world for the better. I teach because each day begins with a new energy and each day provides new stories. I love spending my days with students and getting to experience what the kids share about the stories they read, the passages they write, and the opinions they develop. Middle school is my favorite age because students are critical thinkers who are learning the power of their words and also how to navigate social situations; those lessons will help them throughout their lives. I teach because I love learning and I learn best from the students I teach.



# WHY I TEACH



**Brooke Harrison (2011);  
1st Grade:**

I became a teacher because as a child I struggled as a student. It was not until high school when my sophomore English teacher helped to deepen my love for learning. I had the opportunity to be a teacher's aide, and then I did cadet teaching where we went to a local school and worked with elementary students. Working with these children sparked my curiosity and allowed me to help students in a way that I did not fully understand until later in my life. It is why I teach today. Seeing my students' excitement, hearing their abundant questions, and observing them problem-solve and persevere are the things that drive me as a teacher. I look forward to teaching and learning from my students each year. FXW is truly a wonderful place where we can grow together.



**Ann Carbonetto (2018);  
7th and 8th Grade Math:**

I enjoy making what often feels like an intimidating subject relevant and fun for students. I had a bumpy middle school math experience, and hope to offer a different experience for my students by creating opportunities for them to talk, collaborate, apply what they have learned, see the relevance of what they are learning, and make/discuss/learn from mistakes. Teaching allows me to potentially make a difference in the world—our students will be running the world in the not too distant future!

# TEACH



**Kathleen Mooney (2015) Literacy,  
Kindergarten–3rd Grade:**

For me, teaching is about empowerment and passion. As an early literacy teacher, I have the privilege of walking with young children each day as they become readers and writers, and I have the responsibility of making this journey meaningful and engaging for them. What could be more empowering than opening up the world of reading, than finding tools for expressing your thoughts and ideas to others? My hope each day is to share and model my passion for reading and writing, to inspire our children to find their own love of literacy, and to shape readers and writers for life.



**Cheron Zei (2014); Kindergarten:**

There is power in education. I teach because education is life-changing. I teach because I aspire to be the teacher I want for my own children. I love talking with children and getting to know who they are personally. I love being able to model how to fail and succeed, how to treat and help others, and how to always try to go above and beyond. Children will never forget how you made them feel and I want them to feel just how powerful they are.

# CLASSROOM DESIGN





## COME TO THE RUG

Visitors to a classroom at The Frances Xavier Warde School tend to notice certain things very quickly. Students are actively engaged in the lesson at hand—more so than at most schools—and frequently move about the room. Tables or small groupings of work spaces, rather than individual desks in columns and rows, are the norm. Students also spend portions of many periods in a tight grouping on the floor, sitting together on the carpet or on a rug.

What is not so obvious, however, is the strong connection between this classroom design and student learning and behavior. The history and intentionality behind that relationship provide a tangible manifestation of FXW's philosophy of instruction.

Community is at the heart of the School's mission, and efforts to create and foster that sense of fellowship and inclusivity take many forms and, rightly, are at the center of much of our planning. The shared rug at the front of nearly every FXW classroom is an obvious physical manifestation of this. Students gather as one group at this communal spot each morning and again at various points throughout the day. Having tables rather than individual desks likewise instills a feeling of camaraderie and invokes a spirit of collaboration among peers.

For the younger students especially, the rug also quickly becomes a place of comfort; it is a safe space, where all are equal, protected parts of the whole. Given that our earliest pupils were preschool and Kindergarten students, it is no surprise then that a colorful, comfortable rug was an integral part of each classroom from the very beginning of the School. Regularly gathering at this friendly and familiar spot became an important part of the children's social-emotional development.

Because the students have such a strong sense of security, they are much more comfortable participating in activities and discussions in this environment. For younger students, this might mean leading the conversation by reporting on the weather or changing the calendar; for older students, it could be a willingness to express personal thoughts or opinions. Having such a well-established place is also very beneficial in times of crisis. Brigid Cashman recalls bringing her 8th grade students to their homeroom rug when news of the 9/11 attacks spread throughout the building. "It was a place where we could pray together and draw comfort from each other's presence; the students felt safe there."



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# CLASSROOM DESIGN



Even 8th grade students frequently gather on the floor at the front of their classrooms.

The structure of our classrooms in general, and the use of tables and rugs in particular, facilitate our emphasis on active rather than passive learning. We believe that the students can and should be participants in the process, and that the process is more important than the product.

Students often have the freedom to sit in whatever way is most comfortable for them on their rug but, at the same time, also learn the importance of sharing space. The rugs, which are different in each classroom, are large enough to accommodate the entire class but small enough to instill a sense of unity. The balance between the comfort of the individual and the collective needs of the group is important, and the dynamics of that relationship can be worked through in age-appropriate ways on that not-too-small, not-too-large rug.

The movement between the tables and the classroom rug also provides an easy and effective way to shift among individual, small group, and large group work. Depending on the task at hand, students have the flexibility, for example, to engage in independent or directed reading, or collaborate with a partner on an upcoming project, or participate in a discussion with their peers.

This latter use of the rug space—to bring all students together for a peer-to-peer conversation, directed by the teacher—is deliberately modeled after the “Harkness method.” Popularized by Phillips Exeter Academy and now used by many other high schools, this technique gathers twelve or so students and one teacher around an oval table to discuss the subject at hand. According to the Exeter model, the Harkness table, which they first began using in 1930, is “where you explore ideas as a group, developing the courage to speak, the compassion to listen and the empathy to understand.” For us, the rug is the grade school and middle school equivalent of the Harkness table. It is a place where students can explore and learn together, an established physical location where we seek to build those same academic and social-emotional skills: courage, compassion, and empathy.

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# CLASSROOM DESIGN



Pursuant to and in conjunction with our Strategic Plan, FXW has engaged architect Amy Yurko, the founder of BrainSpaces, to lead the creation of a Master Plan for School Facilities. Ms. Yurko combines extensive architectural experience with a passion for and deep understanding of educational processes in her design of learning environments.

The goal of the FXW Master Plan is to ensure our facilities meet the needs of each student, match the caliber of our academic offerings and instruction, and enhance the overall School experience. The planning process will use input and feedback from our students, parents, faculty and staff, as well as the latest research on the ways that young students learn. Ms. Yurko is also gathering extensive information on the condition and functioning of our current spaces and is interacting with our teachers and students in a variety of ways.

We will continue to involve and update the FXW community on the process and will share further details about the Master Plan in the coming months. We are confident that this will be another important step in the creation of the most effective learning environment possible, instill a sense of community, and ensure the safety and success of each student. ■

Like the Harkness table, our tables and rugs become familiar and consistent beacons, venues of exploration and discovery. We also believe that our students learn not only from their teachers but also from each other. That is one of the many advantages of belonging to a diverse, inclusive community, where all life experiences and backgrounds are valued; our physical environment helps to bring that to fruition. The same is true of other important life skills, like listening attentively, speaking thoughtfully, and working collaboratively.

Classroom design does not by itself, of course, guarantee particular outcomes; it is but one part of the formula. The design of our curriculum, the hard work and expertise of our teachers, the interests of the students and the partnership with our parents all help to determine *what* our students learn. Our learning environment, including the many uses of tables and rugs, help to shape *how* our students learn. Together, the “what” and the “how” help to fulfill our “why”: educating creative thinkers and compassionate leaders who together will shape our world for years to come. ■

**Tables facilitate both small group discussions and one-to-one interactions between a teacher and student.**



## MAGGIE DALEY SPEAKER SERIES



For nearly thirty years, The Frances Xavier Warde School has been living out Maggie Daley's vision of creating a school where children would become both excellent students and outstanding people, a school grounded in faith, committed to service, and dedicated to fostering a truly inclusive community.

In addition to providing an exceptional education and an extraordinary

experience for our students, FXW is also committed to offering learning opportunities for parents, education professionals, and the community at large. For this reason, we established our Speaker Series to provide a forum for us to discuss and explore issues that are vital to our school community, our city, and our world. This fall, we were very excited to formally launch this initiative as the "Maggie Daley Speaker Series." By providing ongoing opportunities to learn and converse with one another, we are both honoring her vision and carrying forth her legacy for years to come. As our logo suggests, we are certain that this would receive Maggie's "stamp of approval."

**Julie Lythcott-Haims** (above right) was the first speaker in the newly renamed Maggie Daley Speaker Series. Ms. Lythcott-Haims worked for ten years as Stanford's dean of freshman and undergraduate advising and is the author of several books, including the *New York Times* bestseller *How to Raise an Adult*, which was the FXW community read this summer. In partnership with DePaul College Prep, Ms. Lythcott-Haims came to campus on October 9 to discuss the challenges and pitfalls of overparenting, and the large crowd thoroughly enjoyed her insights and advice.



Three weeks later, in our ongoing effort to develop an integrated approach to our diverse learning environment and establish FXW as a safe space to have challenging conversations, we were honored to welcome back **Dr. Derrick Gay** and **Dr. Amanda Lewis** to co-facilitate a community dialogue on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. The evening began with 8th grade student Myles Stewart reading his poem "Two Lives." Dr. Derrick Gay and Dr. Amanda Lewis then provided the context for the discussion and facilitated very productive small group conversations.

Upcoming events in the Maggie Daley Speaker Series include **Jean Twenge**, who will join us on February 6. This event is part of our SET Program (Social-Emotional Development & Technology), and will explore ways for the "iGeneration," i.e., the first generation to spend their adolescence with smartphones, to be healthier and happier during their tween and teen years. Then, on April 16, FXW alumnus **John Franklin** will speak to students and parents about his experiences as an intern for both Google and Pixar, as well as his participation in VHacks, the first-ever student hackathon hosted at Vatican City. John will also discuss the ways in which FXW prepares students for high school and beyond. ■



Hundreds of members of the FXW community have once again shown their deep commitment to the School and its mission through their support of the FXW Fund. This annual appeal is the cornerstone of our philanthropic efforts, and was renamed the "FXW Fund" this year to highlight its fundamental importance in the creation and maintenance of our unique community and educational experience.

All of our constituencies contribute to the FXW Fund and, as such, it is a collective statement that we all have a role to play in the School's success story. Our messaging this year focused on the difference that FXW is making in the lives of our students and the difference that we together can and will make in our city and our world. A contribution to the FXW Fund makes possible this FXW difference; it is an investment not only in the present but also the future.

To date, over 75% of our current parents and nearly 80% of our faculty and staff have invested in the FXW Fund. We thank everyone for these record levels of support. Donations of any amount are an affirmation of our mission and help to create the FXW difference. To join this truly communal effort, visit [fxw.org/fxwfund](http://fxw.org/fxwfund) or use the enclosed envelope. Thank you! ■



## SOCIAL JUSTICE STORIES

Our 8th grade Shooting Stars students, under the direction of teacher Robert Jasenof, are undertaking a newly designed unit this year that explores the intersection of faith and social justice. The statement "It takes faith to fight for social justice" will provide the overarching theme for the project.

As an entry point for a deeper and more nuanced understanding of social justice, the students watched and discussed *Freedom Riders*, a documentary film about the Civil Rights Movement. Each student will then research an historical figure whose faith in some way motivated or guided efforts to create a more just and peaceful society.

In addition to writing a personal essay about their chosen peace leader, the students will consider creative ways to visually represent that person. Together, they will create a mural depicting all of the historical figures, and the details of that mural—including the structure, arrangement, and medium or media used—will be decided entirely by the students. Be sure to look for the mural's unveiling at the HNC campus this spring! ■

## LATE START WEDNESDAYS

FXW initiated "late start Wednesdays" this year to provide more opportunities for our faculty to strengthen their partnerships through collaboration and cross-curricular planning. Teachers also use this early morning time for grade-level and classroom-specific discussions.

A few examples of cross-curricular collaboration and new initiatives include:

- Library and Media Specialist Ashley Jahraus and art teacher Efren Adkins, whose work focused around *The Dot* and *Ish* by Peter H. Reynolds. Students read the books, then created their own Dot or Ish and discussed ways to make their mark this school year. They are continuing their collaborative work with the medium of graphic novels.
- A cross-curricular unit (involving all subjects) with a problem-based learning approach is being developed by the 6th grade team and focuses on this driving statement: *Power is the reason the world is the way it is today.*
- Science teacher Lindsay Mosshammer and Facilities Manager Andre Norwood fixed broken curtains in the OSP building by 3D-printing parts that are no longer commercially available.

Parents and students quickly adapted to the scheduling change (which allows some students to get extra sleep!), and we are already seeing benefits spread throughout our classrooms, including a more seamless integration of our math curriculum across all grade levels, and an increased opportunity to create lesson plans and assessments that meet the needs of each of our students. ■

## LITERACY NIGHT

We hosted our first annual Family Literacy Night on November 8, with hundreds of students and parents participating. Our HNC campus was transformed into "Camp FXW," and the outdoor décor, clothing, and activities created a magical atmosphere to explore the joys of reading and storytelling. The wide variety of activities were designed to appeal to students of all ages and ranged from campfire stories to a global read aloud, from a fireside cafe to a treetop typewriter, and from stargazing to a sound hike.

Students who participated in at least three events were entered into a raffle, and the evening culminated in the auditorium with professional storyteller and former FXW faculty member, Patricia Reed (pictured below). Family Literacy Night, which is sure to become another favorite FXW tradition, was organized by teachers Kristen Ellison, Lisa Kennedy, and Katie Mooney, with dozens of other faculty and staff members helping to make the night a great success.



# ALUMNI

We love to hear what our alumni are doing! Please send any updates and photos that you would like to share to [alumni@fxw.org](mailto:alumni@fxw.org).

## 1998

**Bryan Matthews** and his wife recently are expecting their fourth child—a girl! Congrats Matthews family!

## 1999

**Kenny Brown** and his wife Lauren welcomed baby Susanna “Susie Mae” to the world this fall. Congratulations to the Brown family!

## 2001

**Michelle Ruiz** an art curator, was the coordinator of *Won't You Be My Neighbor?*, a public Art Project in Pilsen. Several local artists painted tables and benches to express their emotions around the changing demographics in Pilsen. The stunning tables and benches were showcased at local businesses in Pilsen over the summer and were celebrated and auctioned at a reception at the National Mexican Fine Arts Museum in September. Michelle also spoke at Holy Name Cathedral this fall in support of the Children at the Crossroads Foundation.



Michelle Ruiz '01 with Brigid Cashman.

**TJ Wysocki** and his bride Maureen were married on November 24 at Old St. Patrick's Church with Father Hurley presiding.



## 2004

**Nicollette Khuans**, who serves on the Associate Board of the Shirley Ryan Ability Lab (SRAL), and her brother Michael '06, helped to host SRAL's 16th annual *Art in Motion* this past summer. The annual event raises funds for the SRAL Art Therapy and Therapeutic Recreation programs and showcased work submitted by SRAL patient artists.

## 2005

**Philip Acevedo** recently graduated from University of Chicago Law School and was admitted to the Illinois Bar.

**Caitlin Dormer** is now attending Notre Dame Law School.

## 2006

**Jennifer O'Connor** is a segment producer for Intersport, and recently helped to produce the annual “Courage in Sports” special which aired nationally on CBS.

After a second fight with cancer, **Raquel Téllez Seledón** graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in psychology and a minor in theatre from Valparaiso University.

## 2007

**Mariana Gonzalez** is engaged to Alexis Daniel Bernal. Mariana graduated from Georgetown University and is now Assistant Director at Georgetown Scholarship Program. Congratulations, Mariana!

## 2008

**Alexandra “Lexi” Tatooles** received her Master of Social Work from the University of Illinois at Chicago and is hoping to work on a transplant team at a hospital.

## 2010

**Nico Antoniou** graduated from Marquette University with a degree in Entrepreneurship and is now attending Marquette Law School.

## 2014

**Nick Bechina** reported to bootcamp in San Diego this fall to become a Marine.

## 2016

**Cameron Laviste** and **Jack Bechina**, along with three other De La Salle students, finished third in the ComEd Ideathon in May. They designed and constructed a device that will reset a fuse breaker remotely with a phone app.

## 2017

As a freshman at British School of Chicago, **Ryan Stern** and his team finished fourth in the ICTM State Mathematics Finals. Ryan finished third in one individual competition and eighth in another.





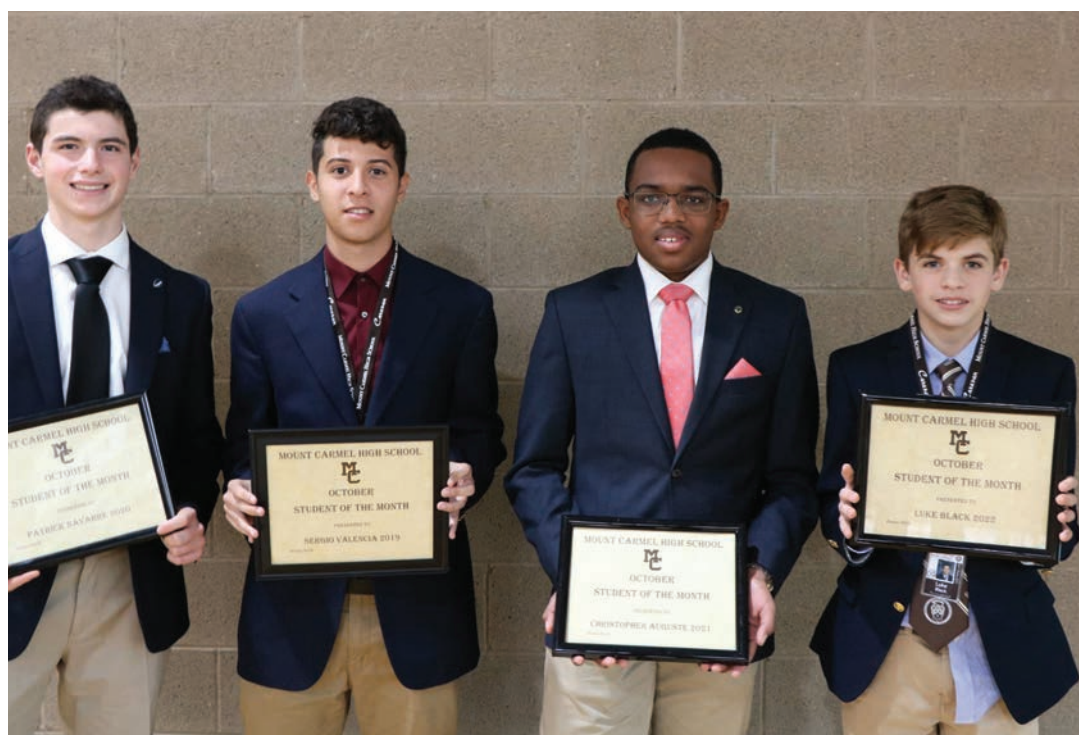
**Tiffany Reschke '04**, expanded her family by fostering Stone, 4 months. Tiffany has begun the process for adopting Stone, who joins older brother Leo



The FXW Destination Imagination team continues its success. **Alex Bahu** (second from left), **Vince Scannell** (fourth from left), **Max Antoniou** (second from right) and new high school friend Adam Eckardt (third from left) competed at Global Finals in Knoxville Tennessee, finishing 4th in their main challenge and 7th overall. The team is still being coached by Pam Farley (far right) and Christine Bahu (far left).



**Abbey Taute '17** had a very successful year swimming for St. Ignatius, placing 4th in the IHSA state finals for the 500 free and 9th in the 200 free.



**Christopher Auguste '17** (third from the left) was named one of Mount Carmel's October Students of the month



# ALUMNI



**Zoe Antoniou '08**, who is in Medical School at West Virginia University, is engaged to Dr. Cris Kaps.



Five alumni, four high schools (St. Ignatius, Mount Carmel, Walter Payton, Marist), one lifetime bond: **E.J Talarico**, **Ryan Thomas**, **Isaiah Cole**, **Chazz Clark**, and **Michael Johnson** (all FXW Class of 2017).



**Nadia Vehovc** (Walter Payton), **Nicholas Quigley** (De La Salle), and **Emma Casey** (St. Ignatius) visited FXW this fall after graduating in June.



**Sanaaa Smith**, **Hannah Gonzalez**, and **Madeline Reese** (all FXW Class of 2015) were named to the National Honor Society at Trinity High School.



# ALUMNI



**Drayona Rollins '16, Joshua Thornton '16, Charlie May '15, Nia Jones '17, and Ali Brist '16,** all students at De La Salle Institute, participated in the Catholic High School Fair.



**Max Antoniou '16** qualified for the Junior Pan American team in Judo to compete in Buenos Aires. Max is pictured here accepting his medal for winning gold at the USA Judo—Senior National Championships.



**Nia McFall** (far left) and **Skyla Billen** (third from left) (both FXW Class of 2013) spoke at the Faculty Appreciation Luncheon. They are pictured here with their former teachers Maureen Albring and Ewa Sieminska. Nia is a sophomore at NYU and Skyla is a sophomore at the U of I.

# ANNUAL REPORT OVERVIEW

## Dear Donors and Friends,

On behalf of The Frances Xavier Warde School Board of Directors, the Board of Directors of the Children at the Crossroads Foundation (CATC), and all FXW students, families, faculty and staff, we offer our sincere thanks to all who contributed to our School and to CATC during the 2017–2018 school year.

We are grateful for your incredible generosity and continued support of our mission. We are educating the next generation of leaders within and through a community dedicated to faith, inclusivity, service, and outstanding academics, and we believe that it is the combination of these pillars that makes FXW so special. When we sent the 75 members of the Class of 2018 off to 24 different high schools, we were both proud and confident that, together with their families, we had prepared each of them to not only succeed in the classroom, but also to be the kind of servant leaders who will make a real difference in our world.

We also recognize that creating the FXW experience—and making it a reality for as many deserving students and families as possible—only happens in partnership with each of you. Your dedication to the School and to CATC and your belief in our collective mission is made manifest through your financial support and through the thousands of volunteer hours that make FXW—and our world—a better place.

We are both honored and humbled to work in partnership with you. Thank you for your support!

Sincerely,

Michael Kennedy, *Head of School*

Mark Skender, *FXW Board Chair (2017–2018)*

Mary Ellen Caron, *CATC Board Chair*

Mary Pat Burns, *FXW Board Chair (2018–2019)*

For complete lists of donors, please visit [fxw.org/publications](http://fxw.org/publications) and [catc.org/publications](http://catc.org/publications).

## 2017–2018 Statement of Activities

### Revenues

Tuition and Fees.....	\$12,905,392
Scholarship Contributions.....	\$932,595
Fundraising .....	\$1,537,936
Interest and Dividends.....	\$325,552
Miscellaneous Revenue .....	\$90,516
<b>Total Revenue.....</b>	<b>\$15,791,991</b>

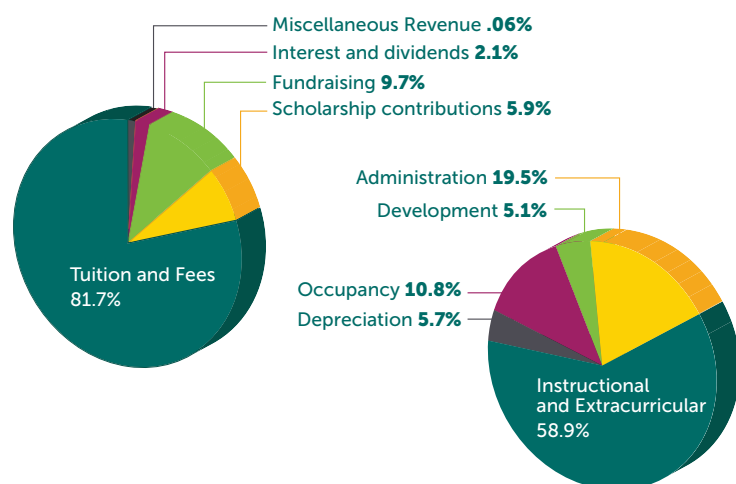
### Expenses

Instructional & Extracurricular.....	\$9,095,359
Administration.....	\$3,012,823
Development.....	\$791,062
Occupancy .....	\$1,671,748
Depreciation.....	\$883,756
<b>Total Expenses.....</b>	<b>\$15,454,748</b>

Board Designated Funds..... \$337,243

## 2017–2018 Highlights:

- Annual Fund, Gala, and Scholarship Dinner all surpassed goals
- FXW Annual Fund raised \$723,000 and Gala raised \$856,000; in addition, donors contributed nearly \$800,000 in total to CATC
- Record breaking Fund-A-Scholar appeals at Gala and Scholarship Dinner allowed us to provide over \$1.5 million in scholarship assistance to our families
- Our newly renovated Auditorium and Club Room, made possible through generous philanthropic support, were unveiled in December 2017
- CATC became a Scholarship Granting Organization under the new Illinois Invest in Kids Act
- Chicago Blackhawks President John McDonough and Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Neil Milbert entertained the crowd with a captivating conversation at our Golf Outing
- FXW parent and award-winning television journalist Dawn Hasbrouck emceed our Gala
- CATC honored Richard Driehaus (Founders Award) and Molly and Sean Durkin (Heart of the Crossroads Award) at the Scholarship Dinner
- Alumni Jasmine Arrington '07 (Scholarship Dinner), PJ Cassell '03 (HNC Scholarship Sunday), Monet Jones '08 (OSP Scholarship Sunday), Eva Tellez '01 (HNC Scholarship Sunday), and Lucas Williamson '13 (Scholarship Dinner) provided powerful testimonials about their FXW experience
- We hosted our first annual all-School Volunteer Reception





# ANNUAL REPORT OVERVIEW

## Fiscal Year 2018 at FXW...

Over 82% of our families donated to the annual fund, Gala, or CATC—or to all three!

Our nearly 1000 students came from 65 different zip codes from across the city and suburbs

FXW students and families partnered with over 30 organizations to perform over 7,000 hours of community service.

85% of our 148 dedicated faculty and staff have advanced degrees and collectively participated in hundreds of hours of professional development

We offered over 35 different co-curricular clubs and activities and eight sports

## Thank You Volunteers

An incredibly strong sense of community brings the FXW mission to life, and our parents and other volunteers are the heart of that community. In addition to helping in the classrooms and on field trips, our volunteers make possible dozens of events throughout the year. These activities fall under a variety of headings, including the Annual Fund, Admissions, CATC, Gala, Living the Legacy, PATH, and PGAB. Whether you are an Annual Fund ambassador or help to coordinate a service project, or whether you mentor a prospective family or chair an event, there is something for everyone. We are cognizant of different schedules and availability and are thankful for your time, whether it is a few hours...or significantly more. Thank you to the hundreds of people who volunteered during the 2017–2018 school year!

## 3 Avenues of Support

### Annual Fund (now known as the FXW Fund)

The Annual Fund supports all the components that make our School so special. The Annual Fund campaign runs for five weeks each fall and provides an opportunity for all of our constituencies to affirm our mission.

## IT ALL + ADDS UP

### Gala

Held in the late winter, the Gala is a celebration of the FXW community. There are many opportunities to get involved and provide support, from sponsorships and donations to volunteering and attending; contact [advancement@fxw.org](mailto:advancement@fxw.org) to learn more.



## Children at the Crossroads Foundation (CATC)

Founded soon after the School began, the Children at the Crossroads Foundation provides need-based scholarship, making an FXW education accessible to students from all of Chicago's neighborhoods. CATC's fundraising efforts include the Scholarship Dinner and a Golf Outing.



(bottom left) FXW parent and journalist Dawn Hasbrouck emceed the Gala; (above right) journalist Neil Milbert and Chicago Blackhawks President John McDonough spoke at the Golf Outing; (bottom right) FXW alumnus and NCAA Final Four participant Lucas Williamson helped with the Scholarship Dinner auction.



**Holy Name Cathedral Campus**

751 N. State St.  
Chicago, IL 60654  
312-466-0700

**Old St. Patrick's Campus**

120 S. Desplaines St.  
Chicago, IL 60661  
312-466-0700

[fxw.org](http://fxw.org)



# DREAMING WITH OUR EYES WIDE OPEN

THE FRANCES XAVIER WARDE SCHOOL

**GALA 2019**

FEBRUARY 23 | MARRIOTT MARQUIS CHICAGO

CO-CHAIRS: SHARON GOMEZ, EILEEN MCCANN, BILL SMITH