



Heartwood montessori

biennial report
2020 & 2021



why heartwood

In a tree, the heartwood is at the center. It is the oldest phase of a tree; it is the first to grow. As the tree matures, this central area hardens and changes, becoming different from the newer sapwood which grows each year. The heartwood is not visible later in life, but it is forever the strong center for a mature tree.

In the same way, the preschool years are not well remembered, and are no longer visible, but these early experiences build a strong foundation on which all future learning and life is built.





Heartwood Montessori is a nonprofit school providing an authentic Montessori education in Northeast Minneapolis



our vision

Nurturing the child is the hope for humankind.

our mission

Heartwood Montessori School grows community by empowering children through respect, independence, and discovery.

our history

The idea for Heartwood Montessori School began in 2013 when neighbors and Montessori parents, Sarah and Sinead, were longing for a quality Montessori program in Northeast Minneapolis. They knew of many parents (including themselves) who were driving their children out of our neighborhood to find high quality Montessori environments, and that did not feel right. Since that first idea, Sarah and Sinead took the time to thoughtfully plan out all the information they would need to start a non-profit school.

In February of 2014, Sarah and Sinead held their first informational meeting about creating a board for this new Northeast Montessori school. The founding board of Heartwood was formed by a group of passionate parents and community members. Together they logged over 3,000 hours of volunteer hours and raised over \$21,000 to launch the school in September of 2015.

Our governing board is now composed of hard-working, dedicated parents, community members and Montessori professionals who continue to guide the school towards the mission and vision set forth by the founding board members.



accomplishments in 2020

Moved to a new, larger location.

Heartwood moved into the St Cyril & Methodius School building at 229 13th Ave NE, which has space for expansion into up to four classrooms and a fenced-in play area for Heartwood's exclusive use during the week.

Added a second classroom with a full-time Lead Guide.

For the 2019-2020 school year we hired Lara Bergman, a Montessori-trained Lead Guide, to head our second preschool classroom. Lara came to us with both Montessori classroom experience and Montessori board experience, a unique positive addition to our institutional knowledge.

Implemented an HRA program for staff.

In January 2020, we were able to offer Heartwood staff an employer-contribution HRA plan to help cover healthcare costs.

Sustaining through the COVID-19 pandemic.

We are proud to have sustained through the spring and summer of 2020, providing a safe environment first for families of essential workers, and then through the summer, utilizing our beautiful outdoor space to help our children continue their growth and experience joy in the midst of difficult times. In the fall of 2020, we reorganized our classrooms to a pod system in order to maintain public health safety guidelines, while still providing high-quality Montessori education in each classroom.



accomplishments in 2021

Introduced & Maintained a Pod Structure. For the 2020-2021 school year we hired Katie Graves to head our half-day classroom. We also welcomed a very experienced lead guide, Erica Mellum, for our school day classroom, and continued to offer a full day classroom with one of our experienced guides, Julia Carlson. All three guides are Montessori-trained. The pod structure allowed us to meet health & safety guidelines while staying true to our Montessori experience and vision. We are proud to have sustained thus far through the COVID-19 pandemic and did not have a single case of COVID-19 in our classrooms in 2020-2021 due to the diligence of our families and staff. We are continuing the pod structure for the 21-22 school year.

Increased Board membership. We welcomed three new Board members to our Board of Directors, each bringing with them a wealth of experience in areas of education, finance, and architecture. All of these attributes have been integral for our strategic planning for the future.

New Staffing Structure. In the spring of 2021, we focused on a staffing structure that would allow us to maintain our integrity of Montessori education while also meeting the demands of a growing non profit business. We hired a new Executive Director, Emily Erickson, who has extensive background in both business and early childhood education. We also promoted one of our guides, Erica Mellum, to serve as Director of Pedagogy, to support staff and families in the Montessori educational experience.

Improved Financial Management & Clarity for Strategic Priorities.

A strong partnership between our new Executive Director, our Treasurer, and our accounting firm ensured a comprehensive and clear picture of our finances, both past and projected. This work has yielded implementation of strategic priorities, including more robust staff benefits, a new streamlined system for family communication and billing, as well as projections for sustainability and equity. Additionally, in fall of 2021, Heartwood Montessori was able to add additional benefits to our offerings for staff, including dental, vision, and short-term disability.

our goals for the upcoming year

Implement a Montessori toddler program.

The Board of Directors established a Toddler Environment Committee in 2019 to research implementation of a toddler program and continues to meet regularly. Recently, the Board of Directors voted to move forward with the addition of a Toddler environment.

Implement Diverse Income Streams and Increase our Accessibility.

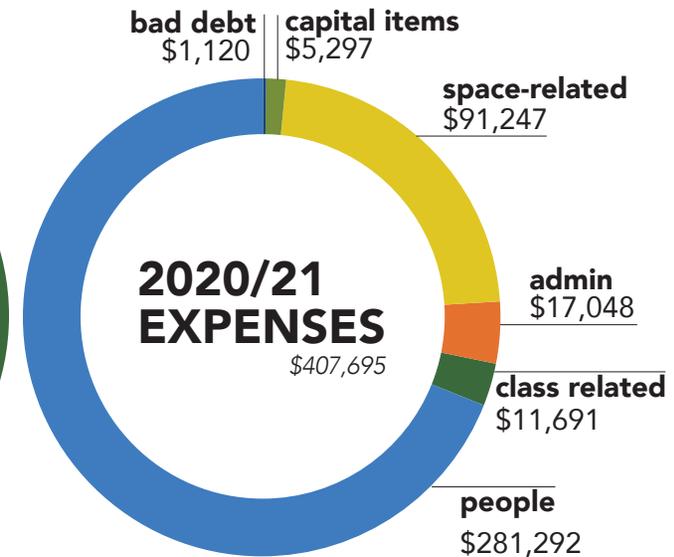
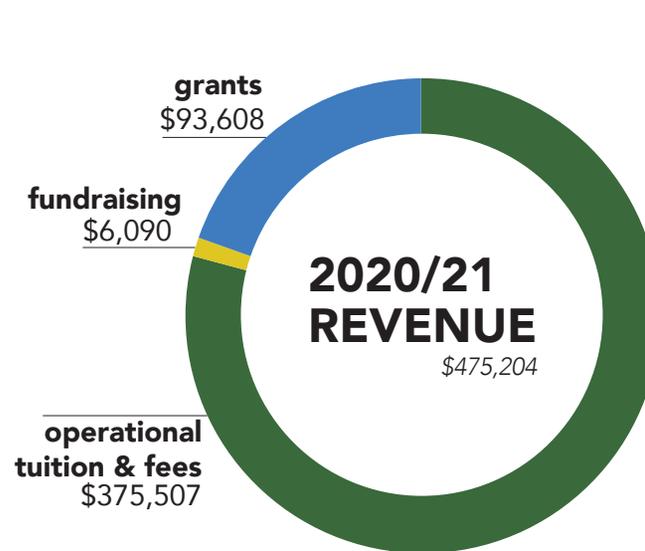
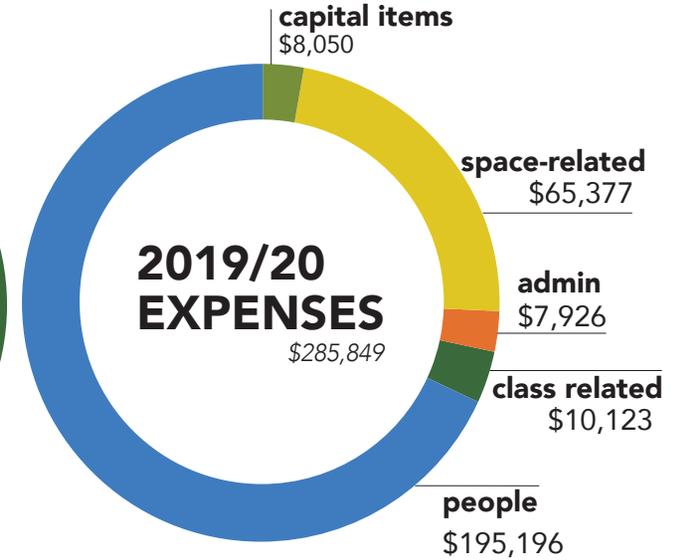
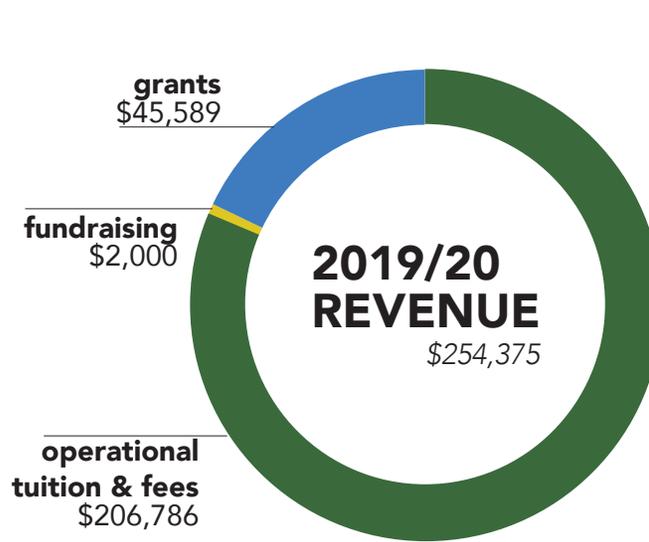
We endeavor to become a Parent Aware community to offer more affordable options for all families, regardless of socio-economic status. We also continue to investigate grant and fundraising opportunities.

Anti-Bias, Anti-Racist (ABAR) Training for Staff.

Heartwood Montessori aims to continually improve our own understanding of race, culture and bias. Our goal is to equip all staff members with the resources necessary for creating and promoting a culture of compassion, kindness and equitability in the world.



financial report





current staff fall 2021

Emily Erickson, Executive Director
Erica Mellum, Lead Guide
& Director of Pedagogy
Julia Carlson, Lead Guide
Katie Graves, Lead Guide
Katy Hays, Afternoon Guide
Asha Yousef, Assistant Guide
Danielle Hartel, Assistant Guide
Janet Molinos, Assistant Guide
Natah Vang, Afternoon Assistant

current board members fall 2021

Kate Murray, President
Keith Johns, Vice President
AmberJean Hegge, Treasurer
Jessamay Pesek, Secretary
Melissa Olson, Past President
Corinne Ivanca
Kristi Curme
Ricardo McCurley

To learn more about heartwood
or make a contribution visit us at
heartwoodmontessori.org



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