

ANNUAL REPORT

2018/2019

"Where there is Peace, there is Culture;
where there is Culture, there is Peace."

- Nicholas Roerich

MISSION STATEMENT

Through the shared ethics and knowledge of parents and educators, The Circle School cultivates a thriving and compassionate community while individualizing education, fostering a lifelong love of learning, and providing the confidence and leadership skills needed to become impactful citizens of the world.

THE PEACE BANNER

Our school flag is a Banner of Peace, a symbol of our principles and our commitment; we use the Banner of Peace on our official material. We seek a healthy, rational future. Additional information about Nicholas Roerich can be found at the Nicholas Roerich Museum website at <http://www.roerich.org/index.html>.



THE CIRCLE SCHOOL

217 Pershing Avenue
San Antonio, Texas 78209

ABOUT THE CIRCLE SCHOOL

Since 1965, The Circle School has been proving the value of ethical family-integrated education in a cooperative setting that empowers our members to learn and lead. Through the shared ethics and knowledge of parents and educators, the Circle School cultivates a thriving and compassionate community while individualizing education, fostering a lifelong love of learning, and providing the confidence and leadership skills needed to become impactful citizens of the world. Our two mottos are “Peace Through Culture” and “A School as Unique as Your Child.” Both capture the essence of our distinctive curriculum oriented around several elements: 1) daily oral storytelling teaching folk wisdom lessons from cultures around the world; 2) creative learning to develop self-expression through the arts; 3) nature-based education and care for the planet through conserving, gardening, composting, and recycling; 4) respectful conflict resolution practices to cultivate compassion, empathy, and a concern for social justice. We emphasize integrative and individualized education focusing on the social, emotional, and psychological development of the whole child. In 2016, we were given international designation as an Ashoka Changemaker School, to recognize our efforts to cultivate young people with the skills and confidence to change the world for the good of all.

CHANGE MAKERS!

BLANCA LUNA,
ADMINISTRATOR



This year we completed our second year as an Ashoka Changemaker school. Ashoka schools are places where all students are empowered to contribute to change in positive ways. In the 1960's our founder, Isabeth Bakke Hardy, wrote an educational thesis about developing in children a sense of, and feeling for, the common good. Every day, I see our students demonstrating compassion and thinking beyond themselves to make change. As you look at this report, please take joy in our accomplishments and think about how our school and co-op work to create a community that betters us all as human beings.



changemakers®

THE 2018-2019 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

This year, operational procedures were created in order to support the recently updated bylaws, making day-to-day operations of the school run more efficiently. Board and staff members redefined and improved upon existing procedures for the hiring process. The Circle School website was completely updated and redesigned. The Personnel Committee met with the School Administrator and the Education Coordinator every month, to provide continuous staff support. The Board committed countless hours of their personal time to the research, compilation, editing, and creation of various documents: bylaws, job descriptions, operations manual, grant-writing, and strategic planning.



MARAY MCCHESNEY
PRESIDENT



CARRIE SMITH
VICE PRESIDENT,
COMMUNICATIONS
DIRECTOR



JENNY RICE
TREASURER



LAYLA COLEMAN
SECRETARY



REBECCA STEELE
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CASARA NORTHRUP
DIRECTOR OF
FUNDRAISING
EVENTS



KRISTI MARTINELLI
CO-OP
COORDINATOR



SELENE ABAD
NEW FAMILY &
ENROLLMENT
DIRECTOR



GEOFF DENNIS
DIRECTOR OF
FUNDRAISING
DEVELOPMENT



ROSS WEBB
DIRECTOR OF
BUILDINGS &
GROUNDS



CESAR SILVA
DIRECTOR OF
BUILDINGS &
GROUNDS

2018-2019 TEACHERS & STAFF



BETHANY KELLEHER
SUN ROOM



RIA CARRILLO
MOON ROOM



JASON GOSSARD
STAR ROOM



JOEL BARELLA
SKY ROOM



MIKE CAREY
PEACE ROOM



ANGELA BECK
SONG ROOM



SARAH TIMMONS
RAINBOW ROOM



TERRY RAMIREZ
DREAM ROOM

2018-2019 TEACHERS & STAFF



BLANCA LUNA
ADMINISTRATOR



RACHEL REED
EDUCATION COORDINATOR



YVONNE WOOD
BOOKKEEPER



STEPH HUSKINS
MUSIC TEACHER



KRISTI MARTINELLI
GARDENING TEACHER



SARAH BOYD
YOGA TEACHER



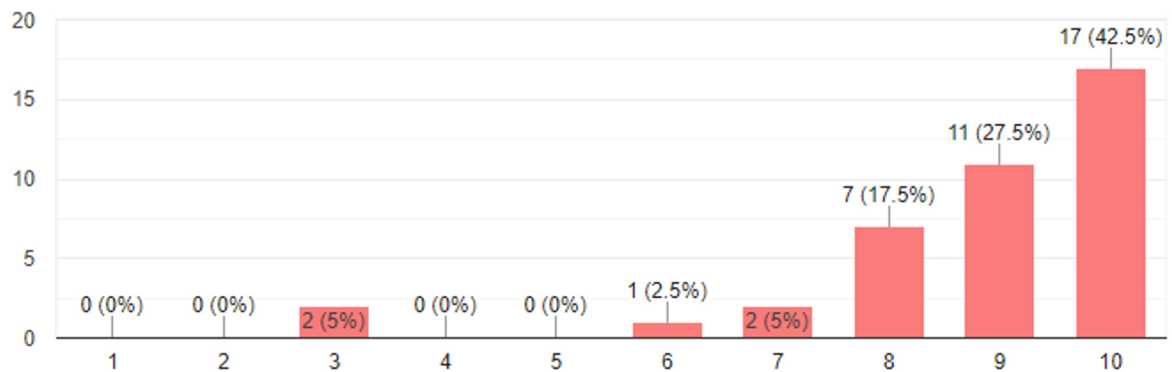
SONNY LUNA SAXON
ART TEACHER



MICKEY BARCUS
ART TEACHER

This year's staff and classroom teachers took advantage of a variety of professional development opportunities. Ria Carrillo (Sun Room teacher) obtained her Montessori certification. Rachel Reed (Education Coordinator) completed a Non-profit Management Training and Leadership Training with the San Antonio Area Foundation, in addition to obtaining her Child Development certification. Our Lead Teacher, Jason Gossard (Star Room, Kindergarten), and our 4-5th grade teacher, Sarah Timmons (Rainbow Room), attended the South by Southwest Conference. Finally, our two pre-kindergarten teachers, Bethany Kelleher (Moon Room) and Ria Carrillo (Sun Room), as well as Kristi Martinelli (Gardening Teacher, all grade levels), all obtained their Master Gardener certification.

Overall, how satisfied are you with the education your child is receiving at this school?



END OF YEAR SURVEY COMMENTS

Mr. Mike is awesome. He makes learning fun. The Peace room kids all love each other and love school because of his guidance and positivity.

Bethany has been amazing, I cannot give her enough praise. She was exactly what my child needed this year.

I love your energy and love that you understood the ethos of the campus and you became a guide for the kids vs force feeding them info.

I love how Miss Terry holds students accountable and has high standards. Her passion for the school and students shines through.

Miss Sarah is a gem. Her love of learning is contagious and her interactions with students are magical.

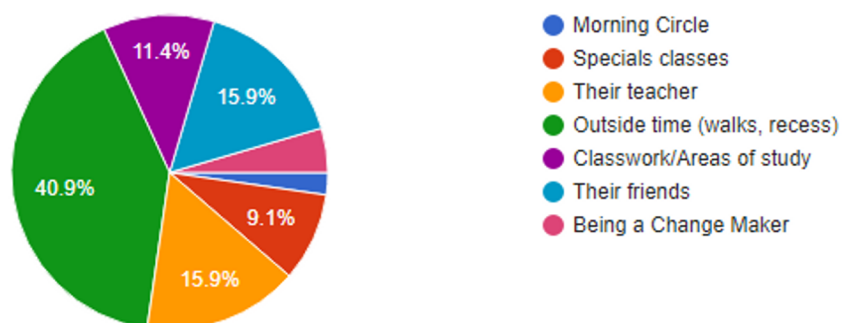
Mr Jason is the epitome of a fantastic teacher. He sees those kids as equals and enjoys his time with them as much as they do with him.

PEACE THROUGH CULTURE

Our students were very busy this year, engaging in a wide variety of activities aimed at addressing The Circle School's mission to foster a lifelong love of learning, as well as provide the confidence and leadership skills needed to become impactful citizens of the world. The Future City Team won first place at regionals competition. The Peacebots participated, and placed 2nd, in the First LEGO League Robotics competition with students around San Antonio. Since 2016, we have continued to maintain our status as an Ashoka Changemaker school, with students forming committees and meeting regularly to discuss initiatives for bettering their community. Our graduating 8th grader, Hannah Wilder, held many creative fundraisers to help finance her class trip to Europe. Classmates supported her by producing a Vaudeville show, which was attended by school and co-op friends and families. Staff also provided school-wide RadKids training to students, a program designed to increase children's ability to recognize and avoid potentially dangerous situations, violence, and harm.

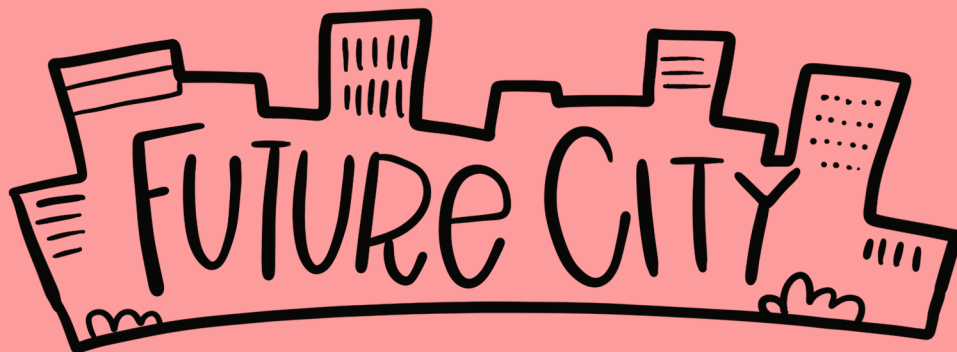
Students in the Sun Room (pre-kindergarten) received their Wildlife Certification through the Junior Master Gardener program. Star Room (kindergarten) students spent more than 20 hours during six different excursions immersed in the outdoors via Forest School, exploring nearby natural areas. **On average, all students spent about 5.5 hours per week dedicated to free/play recess/neighborhood walks/outdoor lessons & explorations; approximately 41% of students reported outdoor time to be what they love most about The Circle School.** This is in addition to specials classes in art, music, yoga, and gardening! **Students also heard 224 stories from cultures around the world, told every morning and afternoon by our classroom teacher-storytellers.**

What does your child love most about the school?



Through the efforts of the Field Trips committee (another Co-op initiative), students took experiential learning trips outside the classroom to the Botanical Gardens, the Scobee Planetarium, the Blue Star Arts Complex, and various special exhibits at The Witte Museum and McNay Art Museum. Students also had the opportunity to visit the Tobin Center to see Black Violin, the Carver Center to see the Mitotiliztli Yaoyollohtli Aztec Dance Company, the Carver Center to see "Wings of Courage," the Magik Theater to see "SchoolHouse Rock, the Majestic Theater to see "The Nutcracker," as well as the The San Antonio Symphony for a "Young People's Concert."

The Field Trips Committee also facilitated visits from numerous individuals and organizations that share the mission and vision of The Circle School. We hosted visits from David Liss, a local novelist and comic book author, as well as Dinosaur George. The Guide Dogs of Texas, Eco Centro, and Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation also came to teach our students about the work their organizations do to serve the common good.



The Circle School's Future City Competition team **won the regional competition at NASA** in January of 2019, and in February they participated in the national competition held in Washington DC. At regionals, they were awarded the Best Engineered Project award; Sarah Timmons (Rainbow and Dream Room teacher) won the Teacher Award; and 8th grader Hannah Wilder won the Presenter Award!





Our "Peacebots" team competed in the FIRST® LEGO® League Robotics qualifier tournament and took home the 2nd place (out of 16 teams) trophy in robot performance for the Alamo Region!

Within the walls of our old schoolhouse, Morning Circle is a long-standing tradition. Each Circle includes a story told by one of our teachers. Storytelling for educational purposes has been a practice throughout history, and for good reason, it is once again being recognized by academic leaders as an effective method of illustrating even the most complex and abstract concepts. Creative storytelling sparks interest in a way that can create lasting memories.



Children are developing a love for growing things and appreciating the world around them at The Circle School. Ms. Ria said, "Not only are we creating a safe haven for pollinators and beautifying our school, we are also making our school part of the ecosystem. For the Sun Room children, that is being a Changemaker."



Inspired by Vaudeville, the Rainbow Dream Traveling Theatricals presented their Vaudevillian Variety Show which included juggling, dramatic interpretation, contortion, animal training, dancing, miming and magic. Performers included Judini, Fish Woman, the Master of Rings and Mimi the Mime. Proceeds from the show benefited our 8th grade class trip!



THE SCHOOL COOPERATIVE

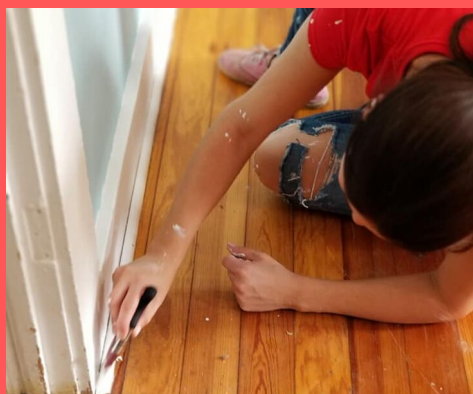
Our Co-op is an exercise in robust democracy: we draw upon the diverse skill sets of our members to address the needs of our community and equally value each member's contributions. This year, our community logged over 8,116 co-op hours doing the work that sustains us. We held five community-wide co-op meetings where the community was educated by San Antonio Waste Management about recycling, composting, and trash; approved budgets and had a robust and democratic community-wide discussion about revisions to our budgeting procedure; planned events such as CircleFest and International Food Festival; voted on amendments to our bylaws; made plans for the next academic year; voted in elections for the Board of Directors; planned for The Big Give; held a community-wide discussion about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to our school community; and planned the last-day-of-school Annual Picnic. This year, Co-op members joined together to facilitate PE classes under the leadership of Ross Webb, our Building and Grounds Director, who employed the BOKS curriculum designed to address fitness inequality. The Art Building was also raised and re-floored thanks to donations & community effort from our Co-op. A partnership was established with Eco Centro at San Antonio College, resulting in both knowledge and resources being shared with The Circle School. A small group of Co-op members worked together under the leadership of Vice President Carrie Smith, to revise the school's Bylaws which were approved by the Co-op in January of 2019. In March of 2019, the Co-op came together to discuss and approve the 2019-2020 school budget that will take us through the year ahead. In June 2019, under the direction of incoming Building and Grounds Director Omar Velasco, our beloved Carriage House received some crucial foundation repairs and the Main Building got a new roof!





WORK DAYS

We held 9 Work Days, where we made all the classrooms ready for the first day of school, did general cleaning and maintenance throughout the building and grounds, deep-cleaned the school, repainted many of the classrooms, repaired and sealed wooden floors, put new floors in one classroom, lifted up the floor of the Art Building, did landscaping, made new raised bed gardens for classrooms, spread new organic compost on our garden beds, mulched garden beds, built a compost bin, built a Garden Shed, cleaned, organized, and built new shelves in our basement, replaced floorboards in the playhouse, sanded and sealed the stage for our outdoor classroom, addressed fire code inspection issues by drawing upon the expertise within our community, and demolished the slide structure that was unsafe.



FUNDRAISERS

In the fall of 2018, the board initiated a GoFundMe campaign to raise holiday bonuses for our teachers and administrator. **Through the Circle of Friends Fund, we successfully raised \$5,349.** Circle Fest, held on October 20, 2018, is our annual fall celebration which offers kids' activities, live music, delicious food and a raffle. The event also featured a unique Pumpkin Path, where children heard stories from costumed characters on a path lined with pumpkins and luminaries during a fun-filled experience for the whole family. For the older children, there was a brand new 'tween-friendly' haunted house! **Circle Fest 2018 was an official Tricentennial Celebration Event which made \$11,373.96.** During the spring semester, we participated in the Nonprofit Council's annual day of giving: Big Give. **Our goal was to raise \$8,000 to help bring our old schoolhouse full circle and we ended up raising a total of \$19,000.** Our annual International Food Festival, held in April, generated \$14,033 in ticket sales and silent auction donations.

In addition to our major school fundraisers, we also participated in the Chipotle "Do Good with Burritos" night, raising \$353.22 towards field trips. In the spring, several parents joined forces to hold 5 pizza lunch fundraisers, with proceeds going towards our beloved playground. We also began a Market Day, held on the Second Sunday of each month.

Additionally, a very generous **\$5,000 anonymous donation** was received to support families through our scholarship program for the 2019-2020 school year.





The Circle School thanks



the San Antonio Area Foundation



A small group of Co-op members developed into a highly organized and ambitious Grant Writing Committee which submitted a successful proposal for a **\$20,000 Urgent Needs grant from San Antonio Area Foundation** so that an updated fire prevention system can be installed. Thanks to this grant from the SAAFDN, the project will be completed in July 2019.

The Grant Writing Committee will only get stronger with more coordination and grant-writing workshops that will be held in the coming months. "We became more ambitious about the kinds of grants we are applying for, and developed good communication and vision about grant priorities. We have begun to develop a system for writing many grants on an ongoing basis, and have a grants database to track this work." - Shannon Mariotti, 2019-2020 Director of Fundraising Development.

2019-2020 STRATEGIC GOALS

Year 1: Complete operational procedure manual. Recruit an outside Advisory Board. Research sliding scale tuition along with increasing the dollar value of donated Co-op hours. Send specials newsletters to the community once per quarter. Regularize grant-writing program to raise money for infrastructure needs and to extend the unique strengths of our educational program. Prioritize yearly savings plan for the school and save at least \$5,000 this year.

Year 2: Install a permanent shade structure for our playground. Repave and stripe our driveway. Expand our Changemaker program and partner with like-minded community members. Provide teacher raises. Save at least \$8,000 towards 2025 audit.

Year 3: Provide ground-work for Capital Campaign. Install automated magnetic keypad entry on all gates & front door. Build our last classroom structure. Save \$11,000 by the end of the year.

Year 4: Carry out Capital Campaign to build final classroom space.

Year 5: Audit is complete.

OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

The Circle School is not just a school for our children, but a welcoming place of discovery for the whole community. Because of the school's unique Cooperative Model, children, parents, and staff learn the tools to be effective problem solvers, leaders, and innovators in a community setting, modeling for our children that peace can be achieved through respectfully and compassionately working together, even during periods of change and growth. This year, our Co-op came together to revitalize our physical and organizational infrastructure, from major building improvements to refining our Bylaws and policies. With these improvements underway, I am beyond excited to see what our Circle School community can accomplish next!



MARAY MCCHESNEY
BOARD PRESIDENT