St. Mary’s Child Center

Annual Report

2018-2019
About Us

For more than 50 years, St. Mary’s Child Center has provided the highest quality early childhood education to young children throughout Indianapolis. In 2019, we were able to serve 224 children, ages three to five, 93% of whom are living in poverty. Children in poverty can enter school 1.5 to 2 years behind their peers. The gap continues to widen as they progress throughout school, putting these children at a greater risk for failure in both school and life.

Research indicates that the negative results of poverty can be mitigated by the child’s involvement in a high-quality early education program. Children in such programs have higher IQ’s, achievement levels and graduation rates. Their rate of incarceration is half that of their peers who do not attend a program like St. Mary’s.

The halls of our schools are filled with the voices, work and art of our strong, competent and capable children. The work being done at St. Mary’s transforms the future of our children and all things are possible for them!

In addition, St. Mary’s provides professional development resources for educators in our community and beyond. This work allows educators to improve the quality of the early education experiences that they provide to their students. St. Mary’s provides tours of our schools, seminars and conference presentations that focus on the work being done here.

The Board of Directors and Staff of St. Mary’s Child Center are very grateful to the corporations, foundations and the individuals who so generously support the work that saves the futures of our children. We thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Connie Sherman
Executive Director

Roger Harvey
2019-2020 Board President
Why We’re Here

Thomas came to St. Mary’s when he was 3 years old and just after his grandmother received custody of him. He suffered from abuse and neglect from his parents and a caseworker was adamant about him receiving a safe and healthy environment to grow in. His grandmother brought him to St. Mary’s Child Center and we were able to enroll him quickly so he could begin the new school year with our other students. On the day of his intake interview, he was very agitated, easily frustrated, and refused to leave when the interview was over. Thomas’s grandmother informed us of Thomas’s story of extreme discipline and poor treatment by his parents. It quickly became an effort for both St. Mary’s and the grandmother to turn this child’s life around.

Throughout the school year, Thomas’s grandmother was firm but patient with Thomas who exhibited a lot of fear and defensiveness. She brought him to school daily and over time, his fear and distrust began to settle as he became acclimated to his new routine. St. Mary’s has been able to work with the grandmother in providing a safe and secure environment where Thomas feels loved and accepted so that he is then able to learn and grow. Over time, his extreme behaviors drastically diminished. Our 7:1 child-to-teacher ratio, working in small groups, and our strong image of the child have cultivated the feelings of safety and security here at our school. On some days, Thomas exhibited reluctance to leave, but when the staff and his grandmother assured him that he was able to return the next day, he was finally willing to go. A letter had been written to CPS documenting Thomas’s experiences here, his grandmother’s diligence in his care, and our observations of their interactions in order to ensure that he remained in a safe and healthy environment.

St. Mary’s offered Thomas a supportive, stable environment where he was finally able to learn and grow. We are confident that his education here will help him form the important bonds of trust and security that his grandmother worked so diligently to foster. Thomas is just one example of the hundreds of children that SMCC helps annually to develop both inside and outside of the classroom.
Fiscal Year July 1, 2018-June 30, 2019

2018-2019 Operating Income
Contributions & Fundraising Events: $1,430,000
School Tuition: $151,000
Program Service Feed: $320,000
Grants & Other Public Support: $5,650,000
Interest Income & Other: $43,000
Total Income: $7,594,000

2018-2019 Operating Expenses
Salaries & Wages: $1,797,000
Benefits & Taxes: $532,000
Professional Services: $28,000
Administrative & Supplies: $169,000
Property Insurance: $9,000
Depreciation: $67,000
Repairs & Maintenance: $151,000
Occupancy Costs: $77,000
Bad Debts: ($4,000)
Other: $194,000
Total Expenses: $3,020,000
Preschool Program

St. Mary’s Preschool Program provides the highest quality early childhood experience for the three- to five-year-old children attending our schools. 93% of our children live in poverty. We have built-in support for children and their families through our social services, food services and public school therapies. Our Preschool Program is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children and is a Level 4 Center on Indiana’s Paths to Quality rating system which is the highest level attainable. We provide a low adult-to-child ratio (1:7) to ensure that we can focus on the social, emotional, as well as cognitive and physical development of the children. During the 2018-2019 school year, we served 68,218 meals. This included breakfast, lunch and healthy snacks throughout the day.

We served 224 children at five locations: the Thompson Building (Downtown), the Gilliatte Building (Fort Harrison), the Indianapolis Museum of Art at Newfields, St. Anthony’s Catholic School and the IPS/Butler University Laboratory School. The program served the following diverse group of children in Marion County:

Since 2001, our work has been inspired by the world-renowned preschools in Reggio Emilia, Italy. The Reggio Approach is based on the image of the child as strong, competent and capable. The work is also infused with experiences focused on the arts. Their ideas and hypothesis about the world around them and how things work are respected and valued by the teachers. Teaching becomes a two-way relationship in which the teacher’s understanding of the child is just as important as the child’s understanding of the teacher. The school and classroom environment play a central role in the process of making learning meaningful.

Children learn math, literacy, science, social studies skills and concepts through in-depth studies commonly referred to as projects. The children learn through project work and express themselves and document their learning through the arts. Artists are brought in to share their personal expertise and to help the children further explore their talents.

St. Mary’s Child Center educators have begun studying educational neuroscience and brain-informed discipline through our work with Dr. Desautels from Butler University at our schools. Dr. Desautels researches and refines strategies to help young children who experience adversity and trauma in the “laboratory” at SMCC. She includes her discoveries in her books, webinars, on her website and in her national presentations. St. Mary’s staff learns and implements strategies based on new and developing research in Educational Neuroscience helping our vulnerable children make connections, self-regulate and be able to learn.
Preschool Program

Exploration of our world and culture is an important component of the children’s work and experience. The Reggio Approach involves a documentation process in which the children’s learning is made visible through poster panels that explain the project, the process of thinking, investigation, learning and standards acquired by the children.

St. Mary’s Child Center uses the ISTAR-KR assessment tool to evaluate the progress of every child in our schools. This includes assessment in the areas of English/Language Arts and Mathematics and also includes three functional areas of physical, personal care and socio-emotional skills. The assessments are based on the ongoing observations of children engaged in typical daily routines and activities and are used to assess the children’s progress.

The staff at St. Mary’s analyzed the results on the assessments that were completed for 155 of the five-year-olds that left our program to enter kindergarten. The overall growth across all domains averaged 84.4% with the post-test, a drastic increase from 68.6% measured from the pre-test. It is expected that children in poverty enter kindergarten at a three or four-year-old developmental level. Children are considered proficient if they are proficient in 80% of items within each category. The results of the individual categories are as follows. The light blue represents the Pre-Test measurements taken at the beginning of the year and the dark blue represents the Post-Test growth.
Educational Outreach Program

St. Mary’s Educational Outreach Program provides teacher training to early childhood educators, focusing on teachers who specifically work with children living in poverty. We offer Fall and Spring seminars which serve as an introduction to the Reggio Philosophy as it is interpreted at St. Mary’s Child Center. Internships can be scheduled throughout the year, allowing participants time in the classroom with introductory coach support as well as a debriefing time. These can be full or half day programs. We also offer consulting and present on various topics including the Reggio Philosophy, project work, etc. These can be completed at SMCC or offsite at our client’s location. Study tours are also available. These include a tour and targeted training to fit each client’s needs.

The St. Mary’s coaching model offers more intensive professional development, meeting with clients twice per month for 90 minutes each visit. In addition, the coach meets individually with each staff member for a 1-on-1 conference twice per month. The focus of this coaching is to increase positive interactions between children and teachers while increasing child engagement in meaningful work. We provide scholarships for educators who work with children living in poverty as well. St. Mary’s educators also present at state-level conferences regularly throughout the year.

From July 2018 through June 2019, we worked with 871 educators. They represented schools from around the state. Participants came from schools such as Indiana University, Butler University, Early Learning Indiana, Central Catholic and Imagination Station.
Corporate and Foundation Support

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“It has been a joy and inspiration to watch St. Mary’s evolve into the center it has become. Seeing the documentation and photos of the children and the process of learning and growing is amazing. It is beautiful to see the translation of the mission of St. Mary’s using the Reggio Emilia curriculum and providing the means for children who otherwise may not have access to such high quality care and the learning that goes on among the students, teachers and families.”

-Nerissa S. Bauer, MD, MPH
St. Mary’s Godparents

In 1986, 33 caring leaders decided to build a new building for our nationally accredited (National Association for the Education of Young Children) center. In the year 1988, they dedicated the building located at 901 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. St. to St. Mary’s Child Center. At that time, they were referred to as the “Godfathers” of St. Mary’s Child Center. Since then, their title has grown to include more than 190 Godparents who have become the guardian angels of these children by hosting special events and fundraisers that work to support the ongoing services we provide each day. Godparents complete the annual commitment through participation in events such as the Spring Soiree, Raffle, Golf Outing, Luncheon and A Night of Miracles. A unique aspect of the Godparent program is that Godparents can complete their commitment by raising money instead of directly donating. The difference in levels is the annual financial commitment. Commitments run from January 1 until December 31 each year. If it were not for the heart and compassion of our Godparents, the children of St. Mary’s would not be able to receive the benefits of our program.

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- Jim and Rita Zink
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- Brian and Jeannie Zurawski
Members of R. N. Thompson Society

Without scholarships, our students would not be able to experience the high-quality preschool program that St. Mary’s offers. Each level below provides scholarship support unless the donor intends otherwise. The society is dedicated to the passionate devotion and commitment of Bob Thompson. Members join annually at the level they desire through a one-time donation or an annual pledge.

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