



REFLECTING ON THE PAST



PIVOTING TO THE FUTURE



**O·SCHOOL**  
THE SONIA SHANKMAN  
ORTHOGENIC SCHOOL  
EST. 1915

2 0 2 1      A N N U A L      R E P O R T





## Dear Friends,

While every year comes with its share of ups and downs, challenges and successes, the ongoing effects of the pandemic this year included an unprecedented level of upheaval for everyone.

As we reflect on this past year, unquestionably, the most difficult challenge the O-School faced has been closing the residential program. Finding a way forward, dealing with loss, and yet not compromising the integrity of the therapeutic milieu has been a primary focus this year. And, of course, balancing all this against the forced imperatives of the pandemic has made for an eventful, creative and, at times, astounding year at the O-School.

Along with the rest of the world, we miss our communal meals and all-school gatherings and celebrations. Yet, despite these challenges, the O-School has returned to full-time on-site instruction. For a program based on the power of face-to-face relationships, this is truly momentous. We also expanded the day school program and launched two new programs, a Transition Learning Center and an After School Program. Finally, a Diagnostic and Evaluation Center and our summer program, Camp O, will be launching later this year.

In this year's annual report, you will have an opportunity to learn more about each program and share in the sense of accomplishment that has sustained the students and faculty this year. This is a critical pivot point in the history of the O-School. As we reflect on and learn from the O-School's past, we find ourselves also looking toward the future with hope and excitement.

On a personal note, I have continued to be amazed by the strength and resiliency of our community, including our faculty and staff, parents, and, especially, our students. I'm also grateful to each of you for your continued support—financially and emotionally. You have stood next to us throughout these challenges, encouraging us and supporting this new vision.

For that I am forever grateful.

Thank you,

Diana Kon, EdD



W E L C O M E





# SONIA SHANKMAN ORTHOGENIC SCHOOL



For more than 100 years, the Sonia Shankman Orthogenic School (the O-School) has been providing a safe haven and a path to hope for bright, creative children and young adults with significant mental health challenges and those on the autism spectrum. The O-School's immersive approach to care is characterized by:

- A highly skilled and committed staff
- A strength-based clinical approach
- An ambitious curriculum paired with appropriate supports
- A rich array of co-curricular and student leadership opportunities
- A diverse and affirming community







## OUR MISSION

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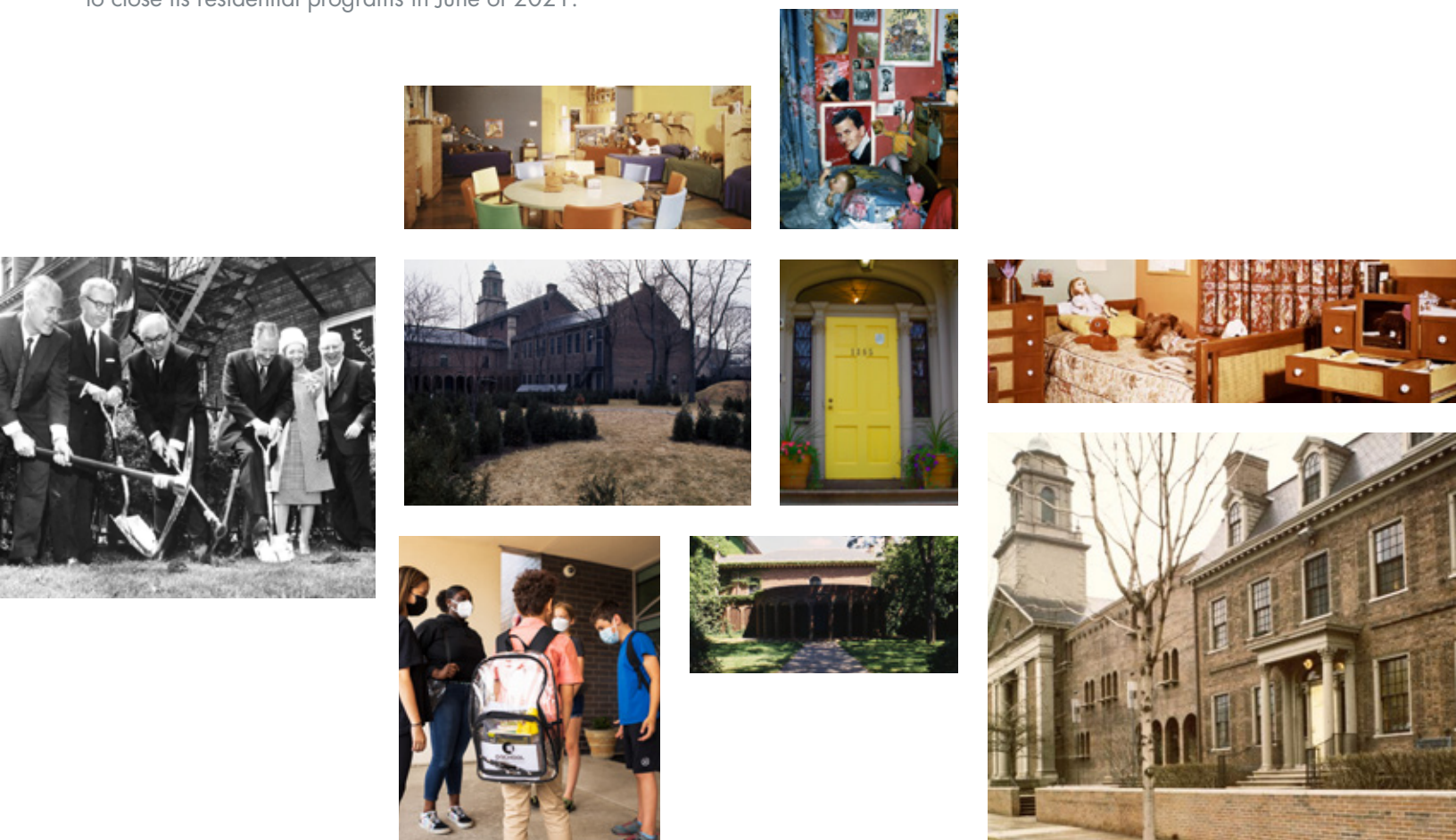




For more than a century, the O-School has provided a safe haven and path to hope for children and young adults facing autism or mental health challenges. Over those years, the school has continued to provide services during some of the most challenging times in history. Throughout, it has continued to adapt and change.

In recent years, the evolving landscape in special education and mental-health care made it increasingly difficult for the O-School to sustain its high-quality residential programs. Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic made that dilemma a crisis.

At the same time, the need for special education and mental-health programs for children and young people struggling with significant social-emotional challenges has never been greater. Faced with these realities, the O-School made the difficult decision to close its residential programs in June of 2021.



"The decision truly was gut-wrenching for me and the whole leadership team," said Dr. Diana Kon, executive director of the O-School. "We knew firsthand how transformative the residential program has been in the lives of so many students. Yet, we also knew the path wasn't sustainable, either operationally or financially."

Closing the residential program, however, did not mean abandoning the O-School's commitment to a full continuum of care. "While difficult," Kon said, "the decision was made to put the school on sustainable footing."

Kon said the change to day-school-only programming allows the school to serve more students at a time when they need it most. "Instead of having a national reach, this allows us to dig deeper into our community," she explained. "It gives us an opportunity to provide more services to more students here at home. That is really our big difference; instead of going wide, we're going deep."





REFLECTING ON THE PAST

PIVOTING TO THE

FUTURE







In addition to an expanded Therapeutic Day School, this programmatic pivot will include a Diagnostic and Evaluation Center (DEC), After School Program, Camp O summer day camp, and the Transition Learning Center (TLC) for super seniors. Together, these programs will provide a true continuum of care to students and families in the Greater Chicago area. The new community programs, such as the summer camps, will not only provide important experiences to younger students with special needs, but they will also act as a bridge, introducing families to the programs the O-School offers. The DEC can provide early diagnosis and advocacy for obtaining proper care and services. The Therapeutic Day School offers a world-class clinical and educational program, and the TLC offers transitional, college, and work readiness opportunities for young adults and their families.



*"Relationships stand the test of time"*

Throughout all the changes 2021 has brought, the O-School's fundamental values remain steadfast—student centered care, a strength-based approach, the seamless melding of education and clinical treatment, and, as always, relationships at the heart of growth and change.

"Relationships stand the test of time," Kon says. "Even though the world changes and moves quickly, and it feels like there is less time in the world for developing deeper and more sustaining face-to-face connections, the O-School still invests in them because we recognize the difference it provides for children. This difference makes it possible for students to establish positive identities as learners and as members of our community. Relationships remain the vehicle by which O-School students grow and change."



# ALUMNI REFLECTIONS

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## O-SCHOOL HELPS BUDDING ARTIST ACHIEVE DREAMS

L I Z Z Y M E I S T E R

**Former O-School graduate Elizabeth Meister** has achieved incredible artistic and academic success that she credits to her time at the O-School. Academically, she is currently working on a master's degree in education at DePaul University. Among her artistic successes, she currently has two pieces of artwork on display in an exhibition at the DePaul Art Museum, has been commissioned to produce the cover artwork for a book of short stories, and has a children's book in the works that she has written and illustrated. She also hopes to have her first solo art exhibition sometime in 2022.

"I would argue that as much as I sometimes hated living at the O-School, I never would have graduated high school without the opportunities that the O-School afforded me. I was able to raise my GPA and I was given the opportunity to take classes at Roosevelt University while I still lived at the O-School," said Meister. "Because of those opportunities, I was able to get into DePaul University for my undergrad. I don't know that I could have gotten into any college, let alone such a good college like DePaul without the O-School."

Meister, who came to the O-School in the spring of 2006 during her junior year of high school, started as a day student, eventually becoming a residential student.

"I was angry that I was forced to transfer from my high school to the O-School, and I was angry that I had to do a super senior year of high school at the O-School. I was so proud to be in the class of 2007, and being forced to be in the class of 2008, losing that was very hard for me to let go of," she explained. "And yet, I couldn't see at the time what a true gift it really was, that the O-School would change the trajectory of my life in the most incredible of ways that today I could not be more grateful for."

For Meister, the O-School didn't just mean raising her GPA and graduating high school, it meant so much more. "I learned how to be an artist," she reflected. "If I had stayed at my high school, I never would have had any real art education. But the O-School and the incredible art teachers opened doors for me. Without them, I would never have had any sort of success in art. Without them, art would not be a part of my life as it is today, and I would be worse off."

— CONTINUED ON PAGE 13



**O-School graduate Ainsley Jacobson** hopes to work for Disney's Make-A-Wish Foundation someday. She is currently studying Human Services and Social Work at Loyola University, after spending her junior and senior years as an O-School residential student, an experience that helped her prepare for college and independent living.

Jacobson began her journey at the O-School as a loner but, with the help of therapy, soon found a sense of belonging. As time went on, she became a member of the student council, the Bargains in a Box group, and the mentor program. She was also involved in the Student Work Program.

"When I got there, I was very intimidated by all of the other kids, but I also was very closed off, and I would just sit and do stuff on my own for a while," Jacobson said. "When I left the O-School, I was the complete opposite."

Through one-on-one therapy, Jacobson learned to share with others, and in the process, overcame her anxiety. Today, she has fond memories of being part of many group activities at the O-School, including physical education, the annual Christmas party, and the simple pleasure of group lunches.

"I really liked the Christmas party and lunch with all the staff. To have everyone together just made me really feel happy inside," she said.

Academically, Ainsley said several O-School teachers pushed her to be the best version of herself. While she wasn't always happy with that at the time, deep down, Jacobson knew it was because those teachers wanted her to reach her full potential.

## FROM LONER TO BELONGING

### AINSLEY JACOBSON

"I sort of owe a lot of who I am to them," she said. "They helped me prepare for college."

The O-School staff also prepared her for something larger. "At times it's scary to be alone, but I realize I have my family 15 minutes away," she said. "The O-School was very helpful preparing me for independence."

She noted that all O-School students have the potential to achieve success, and they will get out of it what they put into it. Attending the O-School means new beginnings and never-ending friendship and support.

"I know when I entered those yellow doors I went on a journey of a lifetime, and when I left the yellow doors, I came out with many lifetime supporters behind me," she added.

*"I sort of owe a lot of who I am to them."*



# ALUMNI REFLECTIONS



C J C H A P M A N

## THE YELLOW DOOR PROVIDES SAFE HAVEN FOR YOUNG O-SCHOOL ALUM

When CJ Chapman came to the O-School as a day-school student, he was a shy, sixth-grader who didn't like going to school and resisted trying something new (he was even a picky eater). But that would all change once he attended the O-School. Four years later, when Chapman graduated he was a confident, adventurous, sophomore who loved school.

"It was a little scary at first, and I didn't know what to expect because it was all new to me. The staff helped me out a lot. They made me feel comfortable from the beginning," he said. "The kids had similar issues as me; it was really cool because I was able to talk to people about whatever."

Citing English as his favorite class at the O-School, Chapman said that while the work was challenging at times, the teachers were there to support him along the way. "The teachers would never let go if you got a bad grade because there's always the next day," he said. "They understood that sometimes students just need to take a break, and they were very helpful with my assignments, too."

During his time at the O-School, Chapman also learned how to play guitar, eventually becoming confident enough to

perform in front of the entire school during the annual O-School Holiday Talent Show.

Chapman said the family-style meals at the O-School were another highlight during his time because of the food and the chance to talk with peers. "I'm a very picky eater, but the O-School opened me to new foods. Things I had never had before that now I want," he explained. "It was really good because you got to sit right next to the people who you like, and you're able to just have fun. It was really important for me to make those connections."

One essential connection Chapman is glad he made is with the O-School's Yellow Door. Symbolic for the safe haven and path to hope the O-School provides when students walk through it, Chapman shared what the Yellow Door represents to him.

"It means hope and security," he said. "I think it's a big representation to the O-School because I know I've gone through a lot of doors, and that's one that I know, and I'm happy to know it."



Meister said she is still in touch with many teachers and counselors from her time at the O-School who made such a beautiful and profound impact on her life. And she made some life-long friends in her time there as well. She is currently employed as a residential counselor and is actively working to have that same profound impact on the lives of the children she now works with. Meister said her experience at the O-School taught her the value of the kind of love and support counselors bring, enabling her to bring a level of understanding and compassion to her work. Her time at the O-School deeply affected her in such a way that she has been compelled to give back, and that has become an “incredibly important” part of her life.

*“I couldn’t see at the time what a true gift it really was, that the O-School would change the trajectory of my life in the most incredible of ways that today I could not be more grateful for.”*

In thinking about her life now and how the O-School helped her get there, she commented, “I will graduate this spring from my master’s program in education. I’ll have three endorsements when I graduate: elementary education, special education, and art education. The O-School art teachers made such a beautiful impact on my life that I want to do what they did for me for other disadvantaged students. Not only did they help me to be the artist I am, but they also helped me see my potential and my worth through art. If I can give back even a small amount of what they gave me, then I will have truly succeeded and hopefully made them proud.”

Meister added that “it’s scary to leave your high school and to have everything change,” and she offered this to future and current students: “Believe in yourself. My road has been anything but easy, but look at me and what I have accomplished. If I can do this, you can too. The O-School is not a roadblock, a diagnosis not a death sentence. See that these are opportunities. Allow yourself to dream big and expect great things from yourself, because if you work hard, you can achieve anything you set your mind to. The O-School can help you get there.”



# NEW PROGRAMMING

## The New Transition Learning Center, Providing Valuable Skills for Life

**Launched this past fall**, the Transition Learning Center (TLC) prepares students for life after high school. The full-day program is designed for students ages 17 to 21 who have, or nearly have, satisfied their high school academic requirements, have post-secondary aspirations, and can benefit from extra skill development to achieve those goals.

TLC Director Dr. Carmen Roberts said the program supports students to successfully transition from high school to adult life through instructional, vocational, and community-based experiences.

"It's been a lot to establish in a very short time, but I'm amazed at how much we've accomplished," said Roberts, reflecting on the past semester. All the activities and experiences TLC students participate in throughout the day are centered around financial planning, college and career planning, social emotional learning, and physical and mental health awareness. A sample of instructional content includes executive functioning skill-building, learning to self-advocate, job-readiness training, budgeting, and business basics.

"They are busy from the time they get here to the time they leave. We strive to keep students busy by design," she said, adding that students have jobs at the O-School. These experiences are intended to foster an understanding of the expectations and responsibilities associated with adult life so they can better navigate college, the world of work, and/or independent living.

"When we think about transitioning to adulthood, we can all think of a million skills that young people should learn, and sometimes the challenge is to figure out which are the most important to cover in the limited amount of time we have," she said. "We really have to identify what are the key skills each student needs to learn."

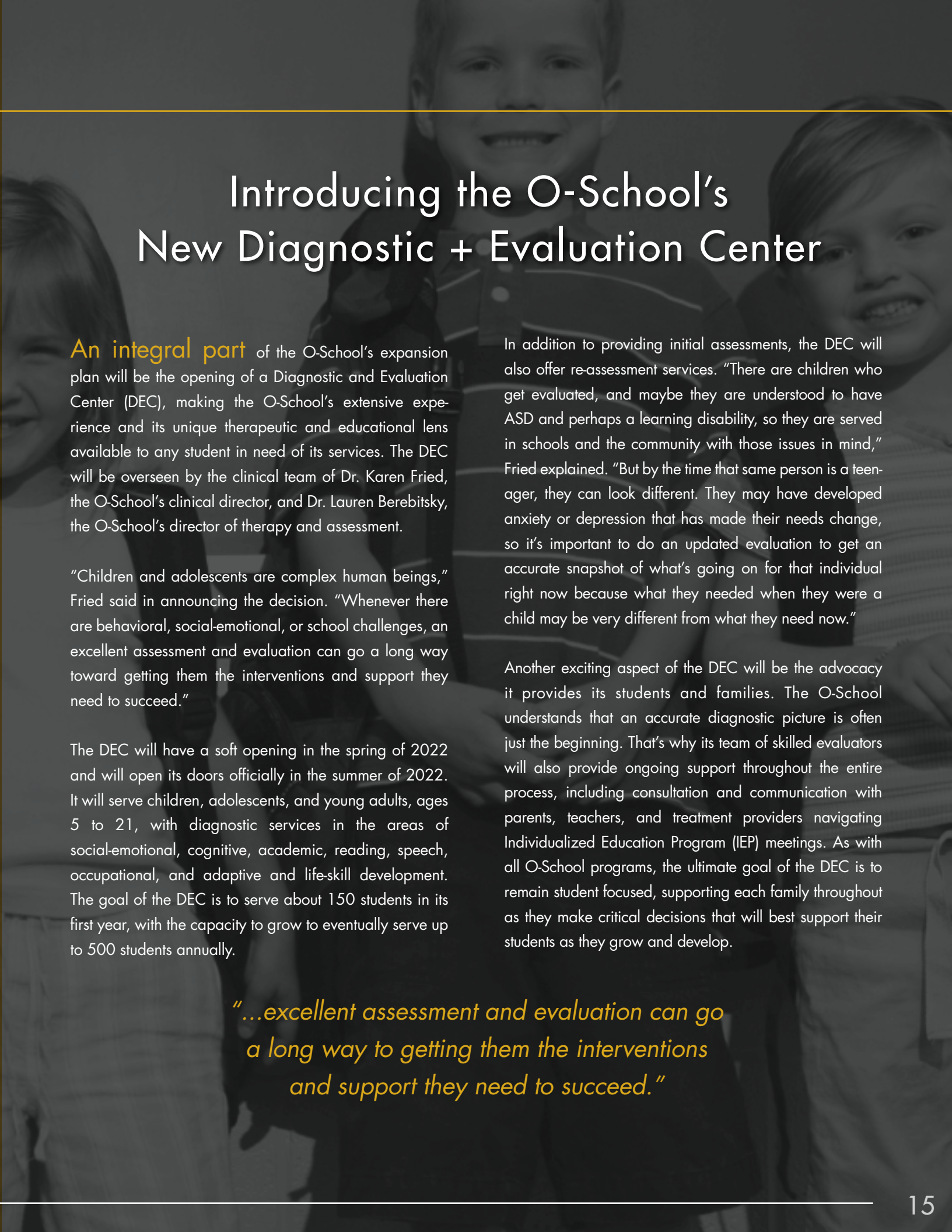
During the program, students explore their post-secondary options, set realistic and attainable goals, and begin practicing their vision for life as young adults. The college and career component, for example, allows students to explore the many pathways of post-secondary education by giving them the opportunity to audit college-level courses that help them explore areas of interest while building the academic skills they need.

*"A large part of the program is built on the premise of teaching independent living skills."*

The program also helps students and families identify and make connections with adult services and supports that might be needed later in life.

"I think for a lot of our students, a big issue is being able to advocate for themselves," she explained. "A large part of the program is built on the premise of teaching independent living skills. Ultimately, we want students to leave TLC feeling more confident about executing these skills whether in a college, employment, home, or community setting."



A background image showing several children smiling and looking towards the camera. The image is slightly faded and serves as a backdrop for the text.

# Introducing the O-School's New Diagnostic + Evaluation Center

**An integral part** of the O-School's expansion plan will be the opening of a Diagnostic and Evaluation Center (DEC), making the O-School's extensive experience and its unique therapeutic and educational lens available to any student in need of its services. The DEC will be overseen by the clinical team of Dr. Karen Fried, the O-School's clinical director, and Dr. Lauren Berebitsky, the O-School's director of therapy and assessment.

"Children and adolescents are complex human beings," Fried said in announcing the decision. "Whenever there are behavioral, social-emotional, or school challenges, an excellent assessment and evaluation can go a long way toward getting them the interventions and support they need to succeed."

The DEC will have a soft opening in the spring of 2022 and will open its doors officially in the summer of 2022. It will serve children, adolescents, and young adults, ages 5 to 21, with diagnostic services in the areas of social-emotional, cognitive, academic, reading, speech, occupational, and adaptive and life-skill development. The goal of the DEC is to serve about 150 students in its first year, with the capacity to grow to eventually serve up to 500 students annually.

In addition to providing initial assessments, the DEC will also offer re-assessment services. "There are children who get evaluated, and maybe they are understood to have ASD and perhaps a learning disability, so they are served in schools and the community with those issues in mind," Fried explained. "But by the time that same person is a teenager, they can look different. They may have developed anxiety or depression that has made their needs change, so it's important to do an updated evaluation to get an accurate snapshot of what's going on for that individual right now because what they needed when they were a child may be very different from what they need now."

Another exciting aspect of the DEC will be the advocacy it provides its students and families. The O-School understands that an accurate diagnostic picture is often just the beginning. That's why its team of skilled evaluators will also provide ongoing support throughout the entire process, including consultation and communication with parents, teachers, and treatment providers navigating Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings. As with all O-School programs, the ultimate goal of the DEC is to remain student focused, supporting each family throughout as they make critical decisions that will best support their students as they grow and develop.

*"...excellent assessment and evaluation can go a long way to getting them the interventions and support they need to succeed."*

# NEW PROGRAMMING

## AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM, A RESOUNDING SUCCESS

While the O-School has always offered a wide array of co-curricular activities, it has never offered official after-school programming until this year. The O-School launched ASP (After-School Program) this past fall, and it was a resounding success.

On Tuesdays and Thursdays, students had the opportunity to opt into formal after-school groups, including the Running Club, Chess Club, Anime Club, and Shakespeare SLAM (in partnership with the Chicago Shakespeare Theater). These groups corresponded with students' interests and were also areas of interest and passion for the faculty staff members.

O-School ASP has allowed participating students (approximately 20 in fall 2021) to spend social time with peers outside of a formal classroom, to work on critical social skills with the O-School team members facilitating and monitoring group dynamics, and to have fun with peers while pursuing their interests or trying something new.

The O-School will be offering a new set of ASP options for spring 2022—suggestions have included Spanish Club, Video Game Club, and Lego Club.







# CAMP

AT THE O-SCHOOL

The O-School is excited to announce the launch of Camp O, a new day camp, in August 2022. Camp O is designed to provide a structured experience for young people, ages 8 through 14, who require additional supports to access the joys of summer camp.

The development of Camp O's curriculum and structure has been a collaborative effort by numerous members of the school's clinical, instructional, and leadership staff. The school is excited to use its century of experience to create an exceptional day camp with countless opportunities for social and emotional growth.

## SUMMER 2022

Each camp day will provide structured opportunities for campers to develop social communication skills (using ideals from the Social Thinking curriculum), establish relationships with peers and staff, take healthy risks, develop their mind/body connection, and practice emotional self-regulation.

Campers will also work on verbalizing needs (self-advocating), developing flexible thinking, better understanding social cues, taking perspective, identifying the emotional states of self and others, and navigating social challenges.

Yet, through it all, Camp O's first priority will be for campers to have fun! Campers will partake in joy and silliness, discover new interests, experience positive social interactions with peers and adults, build confidence, and help create a dynamic Camp O community.

Interventions will be built into the context of daily activities, so campers won't feel like they are in a classroom or therapy session. In fact, campers will be having so much fun that they may not even realize they are working on important social and emotional learning in the process.

Campers will take part in exciting camp activities throughout the session including, but not limited to, arts and crafts projects, water day, tie dye, team sports, BBQs, dance parties, STEM activities, an "under night" (daytime camping experience), an all-camp field day, and a talent show.

The O-School is excited to pilot Camp O, which will consist of 24 campers and eight staff members for a two-week session this summer. And we can't wait to see how it will expand the O-School community in the future!





# NEW ROLES + GOALS



*"There's a great opportunity to form an integrated partnership with the instructional team so that we're a single clinical therapeutic milieu."*





# DR. KAREN FRIED TO LEAD CLINICAL SERVICES

Dr. Karen Fried has been named clinical director of the O-School. She succeeds Dr. Pete Myers, a well-respected member of the O-School leadership team who began his career at the O-School more than three decades ago.

"I look back on my time at the O-School with a great sense of accomplishment, mostly because I was part of a team who put the needs of the student front and center," said Myers. "Bringing Karen on board made it so that I felt I was leaving things in good hands, and I have the utmost confidence that Karen has the expertise and clinical sophistication to support the students in ways that will help them get their lives back on track and grow."

In her new role, Fried oversees all aspects of the O-School's clinical program.

"This institution has such a long history, and the clinical director role is a significant one. I don't take it lightly," Fried said. "The fact that we are focusing on and expanding our day-only services is really exciting to me as a clinician and as a leader. There's a great opportunity to form an integrated partnership with the instructional team so that we're a single clinical therapeutic milieu."

She began her career as a school psychologist with the South Bergen Jointure Commission in Maywood, New Jersey, and then served as a staff psychologist and director of Autism Services for Racker in Ithaca, New York. She later became the clinical director of the Chicago Metro Area office for Little Leaves Behavioral Services and Trumpet Behavioral Health. Before joining the O-School, Fried most recently worked as the director of Developmental Pediatric Services for Advocate Aurora Health.



DR. KAREN FRIED  
CLINICAL DIRECTOR

A board-certified behavior analyst, Fried earned her bachelor of science degree in Human Development and Family Studies from Cornell University and her Psy.D. in Professional Psychology from Rutgers University School of Applied and Professional Psychology. Her areas of expertise include evaluating and diagnosing children with complex developmental, behavioral, and mental health presentations; consulting with parents, schools, and healthcare providers on how to optimize whole-person care; supervising and developing clinicians; directing care staff and student trainees; and building community capacity for early diagnosis and evidence-based interventions for autism spectrum disorder.



# BUILDING ON A WELL-RESPECTED THERAPY PROGRAM





# FAMILY FOCUSED CARE

During the O-School's transition to a day-only program, it has made important investments in its family support programs in an effort to better partner with families with the goal of creating a cohesive experience for each student between home and school. These investments were made not only as part of the O-School's commitment to continually improving its programs as a learning community, but also to strengthen the partnership between home and school.

"The presence of family engagement in our model recognizes that students' mental health needs are best met by treating the whole person and that students are part of a family system that impacts their relational patterns, coping strategies, and accumulated experiences," said Dr. Karen Fried, clinical director of the O-School. "In strengthening our partnership with families, we improve our ability to meet our students' complex clinical needs in a consistent and thoughtful way, whether they are at school or at home with their families."

Across its program, the O-School provides a broad range of engagement opportunities for families, including a parent support group, a bi-weekly parent meeting with O-School leadership, family-focused school events, and the Winding Path educational series, where parents and guardians can learn about various topics relevant to their family. Additionally, families also participate in formal family therapy at least twice a month.

To better support the O-School's clinical team during this shift in emphasis, the O-School established a partnership with the Family Institute at Northwestern. Its distinguished faculty provides the O-School's therapists and case managers with regular family therapy consultation to ensure the O-School is best meeting the unique needs of each family.

*"In strengthening our partnership with families, we improve our ability to meet our students' complex clinical needs in a consistent and thoughtful way..."*

Moreover, beginning in the 2021-22 academic year, students and their families have the option to receive psychiatric consultation services from the O-School's esteemed partners at Rush University through psychiatrist Louis J. Kraus, M.D., and several of his psychiatry fellows. This agreement allows a student's care to be coordinated between the O-School clinical team, the family, and the student's psychiatrists, ensuring a consistent and coordinated approach to care.





# RETURN TO ON-SITE INSTRUCTION REVIVES O-SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

Following last year's lockdown, when the O-School had to move its instructional programs virtual, the leadership team developed a robust safety plan to return to on-site schooling. Due to these safety measures, the O-School successfully returned to the classroom full-time this past year.

"One of this year's positives is we no longer have to teach virtually. We've been able to teach in-person the entire school year, without any pauses, and we've returned to departmentalized classes," said Principal Michelle Zarrilli, M.Ed.

During the 2020-21 school year, O-School teachers had to balance being both on-site educators and virtual teachers conducting remote classes. During that process, Zarrilli said the staff learned that communication was the key to success—a lesson that has carried into the current school year.





The O-School now offers parents three forms of communication: a printed weekly wrap-up that details the week's news, information, and updates; a bi-weekly Zoom call between leadership and parents; and an ongoing parent support group.

These parent supports have been a game changer for O-School families, helping them feel more connected, informed and supported. "We continue to get feedback from parents saying they couldn't do it without us," she said. "I think our new forms of communication support that feeling."

One of the benefits that sprang out of shifting to a day school only program has been an increase in referrals of younger students. As a result, the goal is to add a third classroom in 2022 that can serve middle-school students.

*"One of this year's positives is we no longer have to teach virtually."*

"The three classrooms would allow us to serve third through eighth grade students," Zarrilli noted.

The O-School has continued with all the necessary Covid precautions, including masking, using flex shields in the classroom, weekly on-site PCR testing, and minimizing large groups. For example, lunch no longer is held in large groups, and staff and students are adhering to all state and federal guidelines. The staff is also in close communication with the nursing team to maintain a safe school environment.

"We're finally getting back to normal," Zarrilli said. "We've been able to incrementally pivot back to how we teach, with fewer restrictions due to Covid. We're getting back to the traditional O-School way of doing things."



With O-School students back on site, they are interacting more with teachers and continuing to deepen their relationships. On-site instruction improves their learning and students are once again experiencing the full breadth of what it means to be enrolled at the O-School.

"It's imperative for their mental health that they be with people and that we get them engaged in person as much as possible," Zarrilli added. "Not all schools have been able to do that—because of Covid—but we have, which is a big deal, indeed."



The O-School's relational approach allows students to work through various emotional states with skilled guides at their sides so they can grow and learn.

Part of this journey includes the development of social and leadership skills. At the O-School, students are exposed to a wide range of structured activities, opportunities, and events to help them gain these critical skills.



## CO-CURRICULARS

- Student Work Program
- Job Readiness Training and College Readiness Training
- Shakespeare Slam (Chicago Shakespeare Theater/ O-School English Department)
- Louder than a Bomb Poetry Slam (Young Chicago Authors/O-School English Department)
- After-School Program – Running Club, Anime Club, Chess Club

# STUDENT LEADERSHIP GROUPS, CLUBS + CO-CURRICULARS

## ACTIVITIES

- Annual school parties (Halloween, Valentine's Day, and Prom)
- Annual holiday party and talent show
- Holiday celebrations (national holidays, student birthdays, religious holidays, ethnic and minority group holidays)
- Student Accomplishment Recognition Ceremony
- Eighth grade graduation
- Weekly O-School community group meetings



## LEADERSHIP GROUPS

- Student Council
- Food Council
- Gender and Sexuality Alliance
- Multi-Cultural Student Union





# CLASSES + LEVELS OFFERED



## ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS

Journalism, Literary Magazine, Genre Studies,  
World Literature, American Literature,  
British Literature, Survey of English

## MATHEMATICS

Algebra I, Geometry, Trigonometry,  
Precalculus, Calculus

## SCIENCE

Physics, Environmental Science,  
Chemistry, Biology

## SOCIAL STUDIES

United States History, World History,  
World Cultures, Government and Economics

## FINE ARTS

Painting and Drawing, Printmaking,  
Digital and Mixed Media, Ceramics,  
Arts and Entrepreneurship

## MUSIC

Music Composition, Guitar I,  
Music Ensemble, Choir

## FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Spanish I and II

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

## TRANSITION CURRICULUM

# LOCAL ADMISSIONS MODEL BOOSTED BY RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

**This year was a pivotal one** for the O-School.

In 2020, before Covid vaccines became available, students were sent home to virtual classrooms and admissions became an online endeavor. Through that process, the O-School determined it could best serve the community by closing its residential program and expanding its day school. The O-School Director of Admissions Kristin Friesen, LCSW, said the shift to day school only has allowed the school to focus on the Chicagoland area.

"There has always been more demand for day school than we could previously meet," Friesen said. "Often our day school was full, so this pivot has allowed us to serve more local families."

The change has brought with it many benefits, including more visibility within the community.

"I've done a lot of in-person visits to different behavioral health hospitals, other therapeutic schools, private practices, intensive outpatient programs, inpatient psychiatric hospitals, and more," Friesen said. "I have been making sure everyone understands that we're growing."

After having had a national focus for decades, Friesen is excited to collaborate with local partners so that the O-School can ensure that available programming can address targeted needs within our community.

"We're increasing our expertise as a day-only program. It allows us to expand the number of grades we serve while providing after-school programming as well," she added. "With strong and more intensive student supports available throughout the day, combined with extensive family outreach, we hope to provide a world-class therapeutic day school that fosters student growth and success."



*"Often our day school was full, so this pivot has allowed us to serve more local families."*





# STUDENT WORK PROGRAM

With Covid-19 safety protocols in place, the Student Work Program (SWP) is back in full force.

The O-School continues to provide independent and vocational skill building opportunities via its Student Work Program, which is designed to allow students of all ages and abilities the opportunity to hold a job within the building.

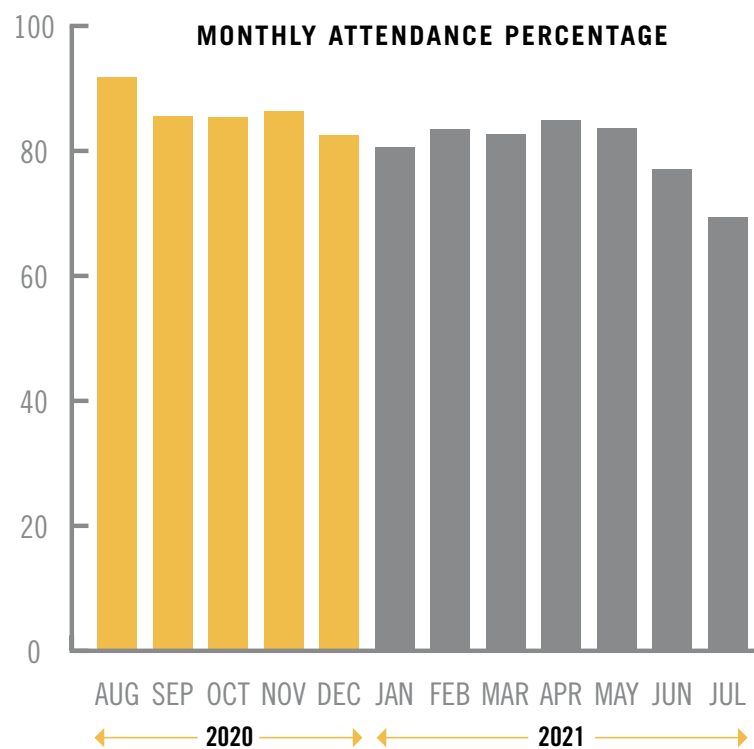
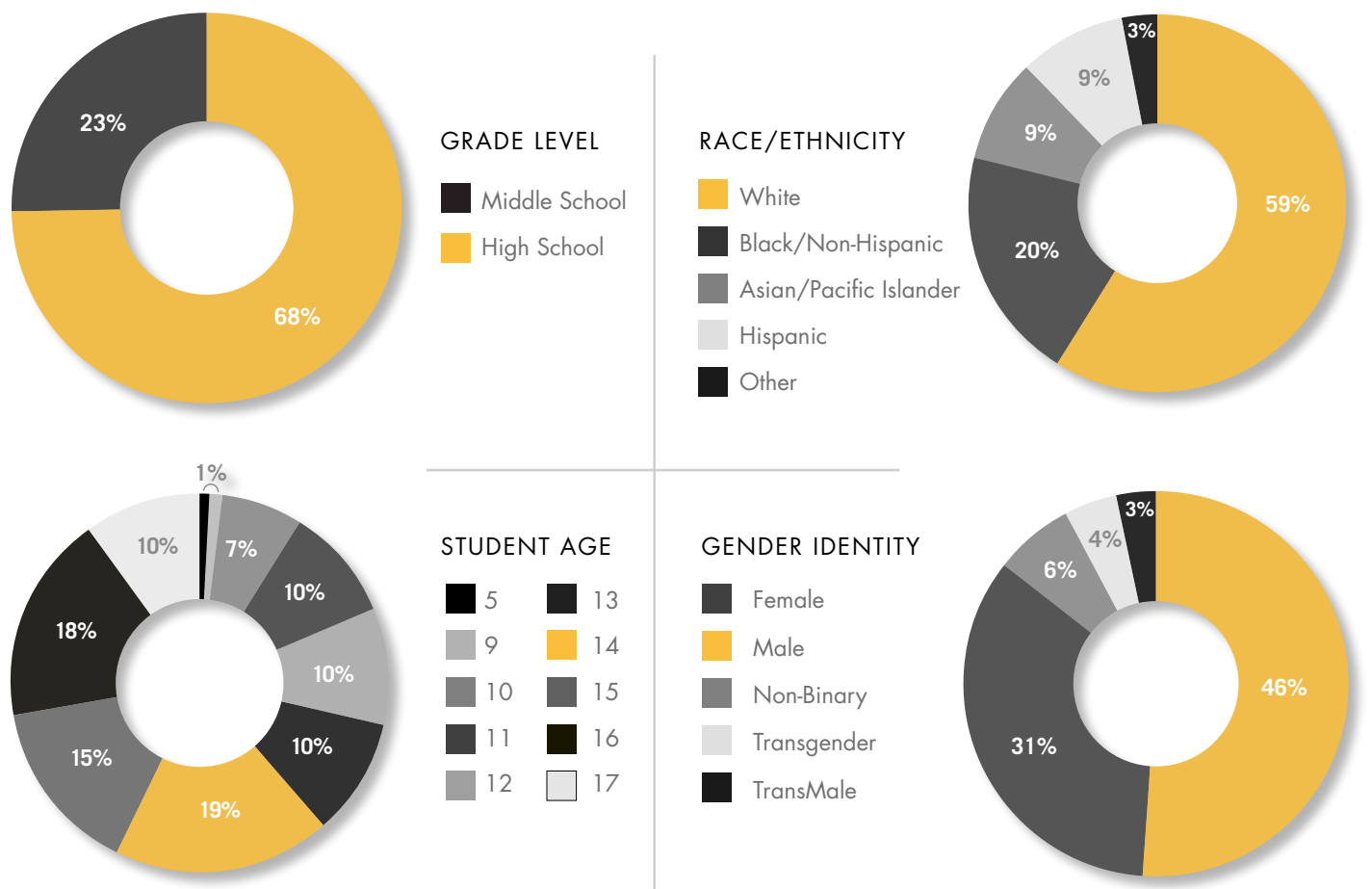
Jobs are available in several areas, all intended to appeal to students' interests and skills, while introducing them to a host of career paths. The program includes job search and application processes, interview skills development, and "real-world" vocational experience, including completing a required weekly timecard. SWP jobs include: main office assistant, classroom assistant, coaches' crew (PE assistant), seasonal decorator, tour guide, and more!

The O-School is focused on providing vocational experiences within the school day, while simultaneously encouraging students to build on these experiences to find work and volunteer experiences within their home communities, as appropriate.

To be eligible, students must have been at the school for at least three months, and they must also have met all academic and behavioral expectations. As of December 2021, half of the O-School student body was employed within the SWP.



# STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS





# O-SCHOOL STAFF

- 111 staff members (through July 1, 2020)
- 97% full-time
- 100% of therapists have either a master's or a doctorate in social work, psychology or counseling



## OUR GRADUATES WERE ACCEPTED HERE:

1. **Ball State University**
2. California State University, San Bernadino
3. **California State University, Chico**
4. Columbia College, Chicago
5. **Eastern Illinois University**
6. **Elgin Community College**
7. **Elmhurst College**
8. Harold Washington College
9. Oakton Community College
10. Whittier College

*\*where students enrolled is in bold*

As the school worked to return to in-person classes amid the disruption caused by the pandemic, 75 percent of the O-School's graduates enrolled in a college or university, while the remaining 25 percent chose to pursue other career interests and opportunities.

# VIRTUAL MEETINGS CONTINUE TO BE POPULAR WITH PARENTS

**In March 2020** during the Covid-19 statewide shutdown, O-School's Director of Admissions Kristin Friesen, LCSW, launched a weekly virtual parent support group after she and her team determined that parents were feeling isolated and needed additional support. To her surprise, the virtual support groups were a hit, and a year later, they continue to be popular.

"The parents seem to really like connecting," Friesen said. "We facilitate an open forum meeting, which gives parents a chance to share and discuss a wide range of topics that matter to them."

Friesen said the topics change from week to week, and the meetings allow parents to speak directly with faculty, ask questions, and share stories. And along the way, they learn

more about each other as they hear how other parents are handling situations like their own.

"Participation is great among the parents. They particularly seem to enjoy sharing stories about the successes they have had at home," she added. "They listen, process, support, and reassure one another, which is great."

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, Friesen and her team had been offering in-person parent group meetings up to four times a year. While the virtual meetings have been great, she does look forward to having parents back on-site again.

Until then, virtual meetings continue to provide a critical and convenient touch point for parents to stay regularly connected with Friesen and her team.





A photograph of four students in a classroom setting. In the foreground, a young man with dark hair and a blue checkered shirt looks towards the camera. Behind him, another young man is focused on writing. To the right, a young woman with blonde hair and a young woman with dark hair are also visible, smiling slightly. A laptop is partially visible on the right side of the frame.

# THE NUMBERS TELL THE STORY

## THE NUMBERS:

- 10 students per class
- 5:1 student-to-teacher ratio
- 100% of classrooms led by licensed special education teachers
- Two Fine Arts instructors have master's degrees
- One school pet, Koopa Troopa, a Red-Eared Slider turtle, for science class





**We are very grateful** to each and every one of you. As you've seen through our alumni testimonies, your generosity has helped transform many lives over the years, and today, your support has helped position the O-School to adapt and grow in the face of new challenges.



# A COLLECTIVE **THANK YOU!**



We are excited for what the future holds! Together, we will continue to provide a safe haven and a path to hope to more students and families in need.

Thank you again for the trust you've placed in us.

The O-School Team







# THE YELLOW DOOR BENEFIT GALA SAVE THE DATE



THE O-SCHOOL'S ANNUAL GALA

**Saturday, May 14, 2022**

**Location + Time To Be Determined**

Our sincere hope is to safely gather as a community. We miss seeing and celebrating with everyone in person. Yet, as with everything in today's world, we will continue to monitor the constantly evolving Covid-19 situation and make a final determination as the date grows closer regarding an in-person event. Either way, please save the date and stay tuned for future updates.

# CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF

## SONIA SHANKMAN ORTHOGENIC SCHOOL STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION\*

ASSETS		LIABILITIES	
Cash & Equivalents	520,256	Accounts Payable	142,746
Accounts Receivables	888,301	Accrued Wages	34,122
Intercompany Due From	2,248,818	Intercompany Due To	176,839
Prepaid Expenses	51,002	Prepaid Student Revenues	(19,381)
Property & Equipment - Net	51,142	Total Liabilities	334,326
Investments	94,809		
		NET ASSETS	
		Without Donor Restrictions	3,451,361
		With Donor Restrictions	68,641
		Total Net Assets	3,520,002
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>3,854,328</b>	<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; NET ASSETS</b>	<b>3,854,328</b>

## LESLIE SHANKMAN SCHOOL CORPORATION CONSOLIDATED\* INCLUDING THE FOUNDATION FOR THE EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN

ASSETS		LIABILITIES	
Cash & Equivalents	\$4,707,377	Liabilities	
Accounts Receivables	\$1,496,290	Accounts Payable	\$354,130
Pledges Receivable	\$51,000	Accrued Expenses	\$531,159
Prepaid Expenses	\$150,625	Accrued Wages	\$88,071
Investments	\$17,989,737	Prepaid Student Revenues	\$482,171
Property & Equipment - Net	\$25,559,783	Term Loan payable	\$5,869,973
Other Assets	\$105,844	Deferred Rent	\$176,356
		Total Liabilities	\$7,501,860
		NET ASSETS	
		Without Donor Restrictions	\$24,637,869
		With Donor Restrictions	\$17,920,927
		Total Net Assets	\$42,558,796
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$50,060,656</b>	<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$50,060,656</b>

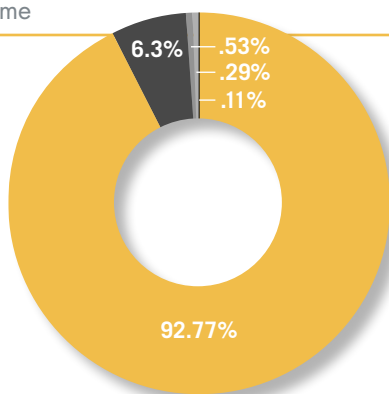
\*(AS OF JUNE 30, 2021)



# ACTIVITIES

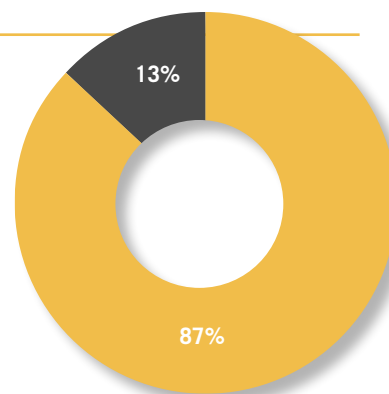
## REVENUE AND SUPPORT Excluding those with donor restrictions

	Total Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Total	Percentage
Tuition & Room and Board Revenues	\$6,760,513		\$6,760,513	92.77%
Other Contributions	\$362,038	\$97,264	\$459,302	6.30%
Clinical Income	\$38,675		\$38,675	0.53%
Net Investment Income	\$8,103		\$8,103	0.11%
Other Income	\$21,181		\$21,181	0.29%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$7,190,510</b>	<b>\$97,264</b>	<b>\$7,287,774</b>	<b>100%</b>

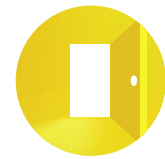


## EXPENDITURES

	Total Unrestricted	Percentage
Program Services	\$8,236,781	87.0%
Supporting Services – Management & General	\$1,232,672	13.0%
Sub Total	\$9,469,453	
Building Depreciation & Amortization	\$608,155	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$10,077,608</b>	
Forgiveness of Paycheck Protection Program (\$1,405,220)		
<b>TOTAL</b>		
<b>Expenditures Including PPP Forgiveness</b>	<b>\$8,672,388</b>	



The Sonia Shankman Orthogenic School is part of the Leslie Shankman School Corp, a 501(c)3, which operates the Sonia Shankman Orthogenic School and its sister school. The Foundation for the Educational Development of Children, a 501(c)3, includes investments, building and land, and its sole purpose is to support the Leslie Shankman School Corporation.



**O·SCHOOL**

THE SONIA SHANKMAN  
ORTHOGENIC SCHOOL

EST. 1915

## THE SONIA SHANKMAN ORTHOGENIC SCHOOL

The O-School thanks all of its donors for their friendship and support. By investing in O-School programs, donors give students a safe haven and a path to hope.

To make a gift to the O-School, please visit our website at [www.oschool.org](http://www.oschool.org) or use the enclosed envelope. We are truly grateful to each of you for all you have made possible this past year.



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