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Explorer West Middle School does not discriminate in any admissions, financial aid or hiring on the basis of age, color, creed, disability, national or ethnic origin, race, religion, sex or sexual orientation.

NWAIS
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of Independent Schools

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Mission Statement

ExplorerWest Middle School embraces the energy and enthusiasm of diverse young people on the journey to adulthood by fostering confidence and discovery. Offering the benefits of a small learning community, Explorer West views the complexity of adolescence as a unique window of opportunity to develop the academic, creative, and social skills required for a sustainable future.





Eighth Year Reflections

Evan Hundley, Head of School

After my eighth year at Explorer West, I am happy to announce that our enrollment is at an all-time high with 101 students. Eight years ago I could not have imagined that 41 separate feeder schools would make up the student body of the 2015-2016 attendees.

Making connections with every student continues to be one of my highest priorities each year. Camping with the new 6th graders each fall allows me to instill the core values of the school at the start of the year and it also allows the kids to get to know me. Modeling respect is so important in middle school and the fall camping trip is the ideal time to set the tone for what the school expects from each student for the next three years.

The School's First Endowment

When the founding faculty member Rick Marting retired, his dream was to start an endowment for financial aid. Since the school is located in South-west Seattle, the endowment helps fulfill the school's commitment to economic and cultural diversity to many more communities.



Thanks to a grant from an anonymous foundation, a very thoughtful gift from a current family, a record amount raised at this year's auction, and the use of some unrestricted reserves; Explorer West can proudly announce that the Rick Marting Endowment is now up to \$500,000. Rick, his wife Maggie, and many family friends attended the auction and the Martings were so pleased to see this dream begin to come true.

Students Building Community

Each year our students continue to impress me with the causes they take on. When 7th grade student Giavana Finkley submitted a one act play to ACT Theatre regarding cyberbullying, little did we know what the end result would be. Mighty Tripod Productions read the script and turned it into a movie which debuted at our Spring Arts Night with more than 200 people in attendance. It really brought to light issues that middle school kids may face.

Change the World Project

8th grade students, Tess Wasserman, Cyrus Storlie, Ellen Applewhite, and Makenzie White decided they wanted to establish a park in South Seattle for children with Autism. When Donald Harris, Property and Acquisition Manager for the Seattle Parks Department, came to the school to identify potential park properties and then hear their plan, I was very impressed.

The West Seattle Blog came to the school to interview the students about why such a park was needed and the story ran in the blog the next week. Explorer West alum Conner Mullan, Marketing Manager for PlayCreation read the blog article, and

he immediately reached out to the students to discuss playground equipment for such a park. I was so proud of these students, as well as the other projects by the entire 8th grade student body. Hats off to Tim Owens, our history department chair, for incorporating this project into the 8th grade curriculum. We look forward to seeing the next steps these graduates will take with their projects and to some day visiting a new accessible park in West Seattle.

Our faculty and staff make quite a team and I am so proud of the core values that our students demonstrate on a daily basis. This is why I love being at Explorer West Middle School. **EW**

Making connections with every student continues to be one of my highest priorities each year.



Alumna Profile: Kale Reb 2008 Graduate

Explorer West 2008 graduate Kale Reb is now a senior at Pacific Lutheran University. She is majoring in anthropology with an emphasis in archeology and indigenous cultures. Her goal is to work a year in the field on an archeological dig in Rome or Guatemala where she will gain the necessary experience to get her Masters in Linguistics Anthropology, the field of language documentation. She is also interested in elementary education and points out that that anthropology and education help inform each other as anthropology gives one the tools to engage with a variety of people including children from a variety of backgrounds.

When Kale speaks of Explorer West, she remembers how much fun Latin was and that it actually gave her the vision and foundation for her new love and

career in Anthropology. She is amazed by how often Latin is used in this field. She also recalls stretching herself in new directions in drama.

Kale attended Chief Sealth High School after Explorer West and was surprised to be

one of only five students of color in the International Baccalaureate (or IB) program at that time. She attributes the hard work in her Rainier Scholars training and the curriculum at Explorer West for actually making the high school work seem "quite easy".

Deciding where to go to college was a big challenge. She turned down a full scholarship at Whitman College, Seattle University, Ithaca College, and others to accept a full scholarship to Kenyon College. As a junior, Kale discovered her real passion was Anthropology and accepted a full scholarship to transfer to PLU to pursue her dreams.

Kale still uses a planner similar to the one at Explorer West and says she would be lost without it. She was surprised how few students used a planner in college, but many began to use this technique after watching Kale successfully juggle work, school, and volunteer activities.

Kale is eager to give back to the community. What started with four years of volunteering for Team Read, then mentoring high school kids for Rainier Scholars while in college, has now led to a new challenge. She is working with a professor to start an indigenous cultural center on PLU's campus for members of the Puyallup and other native tribes. Why? So tribal members nearby can go to a school and feel safe. As a person of color, Kale appreciates that Explorer West helped her find her sense of identity and allowed her to embrace who she truly was.

For new families coming to Explorer West, Kale says "Prepare yourself. It will challenge you because you will do things you have never done before, like speaking to an audience, which changed my life forever." **EW**

A Family Dedicated to Helping Others

Education and opportunity are recurring themes in the lives and work of Explorer West parents Cora Edmonds and Phil Crean. They are supporting the school as lead donors to the Rick Marting Endowment Fund, our Rainier Scholars program and other programs with gifts of \$60,000 annually for the next three years as well as donations in the past. They make these generous gifts because they recognize that community support gives more students the opportunity to attend Explorer West and they are impressed that nearly one third of the students already receive financial aid. Their family grew to five children after adopting three siblings from Ukraine in 2009. In their words, "Raising our two eldest children was a positive and rewarding experience and we both felt we had more love to give. We wanted to have more children in our lives and adoption was a better fit for our life situation." The family chose to send all five of their children to Explorer West because they believe that the middle school years are very important for a child's development and Explorer West offers a small school with lots of individual attention and a nurturing environment. This all adds stability as kids work through the many changes going on at a personal level.

When asked how the mission of Explorer West fits with values of their family, Phil and Cora cite Mother Teresa and her guidance to "Be Kind, Be Kind, Be Kind." "We embrace this as best we can, and, in our experience, so does Explorer West. Each person our kids come into contact with, whether staff, faculty or other parents, makes Explorer West a very positive community - which is so critical during times of middle school development."

Their children who have already graduated from Explorer West have done well in high school and two are now in college where they continue to excel. When the children were asked for the highlights of their time at Explorer West, their first responses were Rome and school camping trips, but when they



Karina Crean, 2015 Graduate

thought more they realized how much their knowledge of Latin helped them in high school with Spanish and English classes. They also developed good friends and learned appreciation for art, music and environmental sustainability.

The family's focus on community extends far beyond West Seattle. They established a nonprofit organization, the Namaste Children's Fund, which developed and runs a school in the remote Humla area in Nepal. This work began after visiting there and being struck by the lack of education and opportunity for the children, particularly the girls. "These kids are so vulnerable to exploitation and trapped in a cycle of poverty with no real chance of a better life."

Phil and Cora add: "Explorer West offers a wonderful learning environment for children. It is somewhat a hidden gem in West Seattle and we want to see it continue to prosper. We hope by being vocal about our love and support for Explorer West that we encourage others in the community to full-heartedly support and nurture this wonderful organization."

Phil and Cora, we cannot thank you enough for being such a vital part of the Explorer West community. **EW**

Kale Reb, 2008 Graduate



Outdoor Education: Adapting to a Changing World

Phil Giammarino, Outdoor Education

Each person experiences a period of their life when things don't always go as they planned or they encounter sudden and rapid changes in their surroundings or both. For most people, the first time that happens is during the middle school years. For most of us, we enter a new phase of life with new people, changing biology, new expectations and challenges and are suddenly being referred to as "young adults" and no longer as children. Learning to adapt to these changes is how we all come to navigate the world, settling into true adulthood and finding our place.

The Explorer West Outdoor Education Program strives to enhance each student's natural ability to accept challenges and adapt to the changes happening around them. This year was particularly challenging in that regard as the Pacific Northwest endured one of the warmest and driest winters on record leaving all grades scrambling to find both new and interesting ways to have fun in snow-less winter environments and how to identify reliable wilderness camping areas with steadily flowing water sources. Our world is changing around us and allowing the student community to interact with that changing world helps them to see their deep connection to it and understand their role in helping to make it sustainable, not only for them but for several future generations of adapting young adults.

In the 2014-2015 school year, there were 10 days of school-wide outdoor education for every student with over 20 distinct trip destinations around Washington state. Highlights of this year's programs include:

- The 6th grade students were beneficiaries of the expertise of the marine biologists at Port Townsend Marine Science Center for two courses on invertebrate life and the keystone status of plankton life in Puget Sound.
- The 7th grade returned to the Cooper River Trail in the Alpine Lakes Wilderness Area to witness the results of an Explorer West-led service project from four years ago and to clear the trail of overgrowth and non-native species, a service-learning project facilitated by Mountains To Sound Greenway.
- Groups from the 8th grade class successfully navigated and thru-hiked a rugged 18-mile stretch of the Olympic National Park coastal wilderness that had not been completed by an Explorer West graduating class in over seven years.

- Without access to cross country skiing trails, the 7th grade class instead visited the Cedar River Watershed Education Center at Rattlesnake Lake to see firsthand how Seattle's primary water source is managed via a guided tour of the facilities and surrounding natural areas. The 6th and 8th grade classes mentored each other in writing letters to their elected officials to raise awareness of how their winter programming was affected by the mild, snow-less winter.
- Thanks to continued grant funding, the school added to its fleet of school-owned vehicles for safe, comfortable transportation to campgrounds by purchasing an additional 12-passenger van as well as updating many of our gear library's backpacks, tents, trekking poles, and snowshoes.

Ensuring Outdoor Ideas are Integrated in the Classroom

When our program began close to 20 years ago, the idea was simply to get the kids outdoors and hope they would find connections to the classroom. But in

the years since, the faculty have been able to incorporate very important aspects of the outdoor experience into their classroom learning units. In the fall, all students who visit Mt. Rainier National Park write and perform in front of their peers a myth (using the classic story-telling format learned in class) that incorporates concepts about the mountain, the region, and the environment. In the spring, all students who visit Olympic National Park, a region that was historically a place for young native people to have a rite-of-passage journey, learn about the various rites-of-passage experiences across cultures around the globe in their social studies classes. And of course, all students are held to account for the same level of sustainable living choices, group support, and culture of inclusion on these trips that are expected of them within the school community.

Years of teaching have shown me that when a student challenges him or herself, interacts with peers and adults at an experiential level, and makes a connection to the outdoors and their community, they come away stronger, more adaptable, and more prepared for life's real challenges. This is why Outdoor Education will adapt to the growing needs of the school and always be an integral part of the Explorer West experience. **EW**

Community Service & Sustainability

Tim Owens,

Social Studies and Sustainability

Spring Community Outreach

Continuing our dedication to community service and sustainability, all students and faculty participated in a day of community service. Our 6th grade students partnered with 4th grade students from Roxhill Elementary and cleared invasive species from Seola Park. The 7th grade students worked in three groups at the Community Orchard of West Seattle, the Barton Street P-Patch and along SW Roxbury. The 8th grade students worked on a variety of projects related directly to their Change the World project, ranging from public awareness campaigns to volunteering at the White Center Food Bank.



Change the World Project

For the second straight year, as a culminating project, 8th grade students worked in small groups around a chosen sustainability issue. Groups worked on issues: water conservation, homelessness, human trafficking, urban wildlife habitat, gender inequality, and the need for recreation for kids of all abilities. The project, worked on in social studies, English, and math classes, continues to grow and make positive impacts in our community. Two group projects were featured in the media, and their efforts continue to have momentum. One group brought the need for an inclusive playground for kids of all abilities, including autism disorder, to the attention of city officials. Another group encouraged city leaders to look at sustainable housing for the homeless using converted shipping containers housed on unused land owned by the Port of Seattle. **EW**



Environmental Issues Slam

For the third year in a row, Explorer West has set the bar region-wide with its participation in the annual Environmental Issues Slam sponsored by the Washington Foundation for the Environment. This year two awards were given - one chosen by a panel of experts and another chosen by audience ballots. Two Explorer West groups participated. The group that focused on the need for better sustainability practices at a local ski resort won the Judge's Choice Award and they donated their \$750 prize to an organization that will assist the ski resort with its recycling and compost efforts.



Another Banner Year for the Arts

David Orace Kelly,

Drama

This year, Explorer West produced a movie! Written by Explorer West student, Giavana Finkley, *Cyberbully* addresses the impact that bullying has on students.

Mighty Tripod Productions, a local film company dedicated to the empowerment of emerging artists, produced this one-act play turned film. Explorer West students (and teachers) were featured in this world premiere. This was the second partnership with Mighty Tripod Productions. Explorer West students were selected to perform in a professional film.

Beyond every student taking three years of drama, fine arts, and music, some of the ongoing accomplishments of the Explorer West Arts Program are:

- For the fourth year in a row, Explorer West student-written one act plays have been produced and published in local theatre companies - four in total for just this past year and one produced by ACT Theatre
- Explorer West has produced the works of six of our own playwrights this past year.
- 7th grade students in drama continue to work with ACT Theatre in the Young Playwrights Program; every student writes a ten-minute one act play.
- All students are involved in the annual drama One-Act Play Festival by either directing or acting in the production.
- Arts Night continues to thrive twice a year with every student singing in choir and playing an instrument and many students performing in small ensembles.

- Fine art continues to work across multiple modalities with everything from pencil drawings to three-dimensional art pieces.

Interdisciplinary collaboration allows students to integrate their understanding of similar content across different areas.

- Drama and health classes collaborate on a project that gets students performing characters from relevant health topics.
- In music, students connect their study of history to various musical genres and extend their knowledge beyond the notes.
- Drama and English classes integrate with each other through a study of Shakespeare.
- In drama, history, and English the same writing format for formal essay writing is used so that students can learn to write with a combination of analytic precision and personal expression.
- In fine art, English, and drama, 6th grade classes collaborate on an annual student-created puppet show.

Through these collaborations, students will continue to investigate and personalize the study of all the arts; the school, along with the students, will surge into the future of education. **EW**



English Department Highlights

Sherman English, EdD,

English and Dean of Students

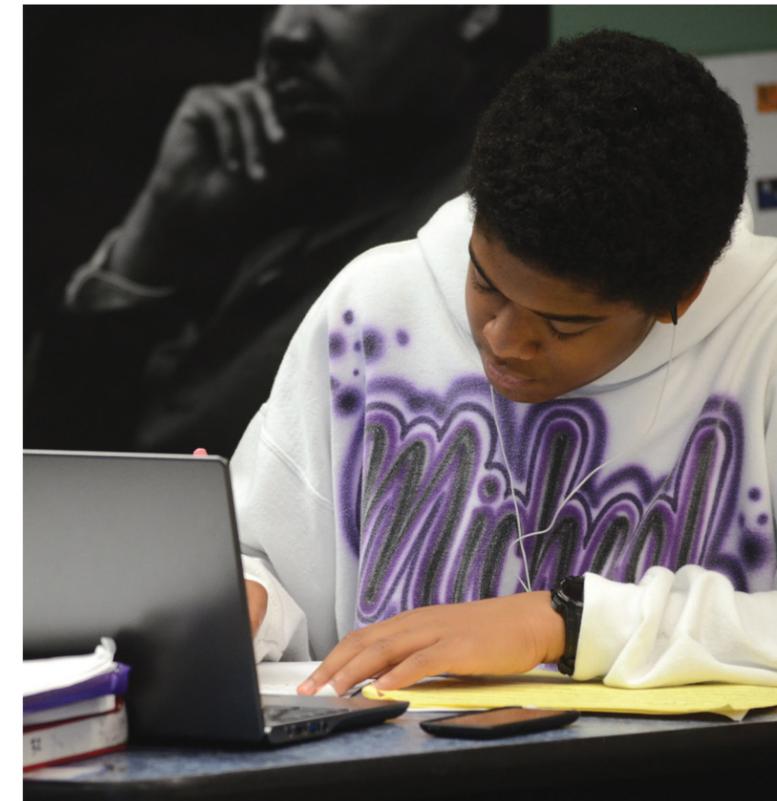
Writer-in-Residence Program

This is the first year that the English department has implemented a Writers-in-Residence Program. We had a writer/poet, Karen Finneyfrock from Hugo House, teach 6th grade students how to write short stories. The process, completed over a period of six weeks, required students to develop the background of a protagonist and an antagonist, detail a plot line, and write a scene, employing dialogue. At the end of her residency, each student shaped their various elements into a completed short story, all of which were shared with Karen. As part of the process, Karen used excerpts from various age-appropriate works to illustrate and discuss with students ways to develop their ideas. The overwhelming positive response of students to this activity has paved the way for Karen to return to work with next year's 6th grade class.

Additionally, Susan Kelleher, a current parent and Pulitzer Prize winning journalist from The Seattle Times, introduced 7th graders to journalism. After establishing the importance of the questions who, what, where, when, why, and how for reporting, she devoted each class to a different type of news article. As part of the process, she invited two colleagues, Nicole Brodeur, Seattle Times Features Columnist, and Sheila Farr, former Seattle Times Art Critic, to talk about their work as journalists. Students had the opportunity to interview them and write a news article about them. Again, the response was positive, and Susan has been invited back next year to work with the 7th grade.

English/Art Cross-Discipline Project

For the third year in a row, the English and art departments collaborated on a cross discipline project for 8th grade students. The project entails a three-step process. The students each select a painting and write a short story or poem in response to it. The stories are passed on to the art department, where students respond to the story or poem by painting a picture. When the paintings are completed, they are passed on to the English department, and students write another short story or poem in response to the student-produced painting. Once the process is completed, the original painting, first story or poem, student-produced painting, and second story or poem are all displayed for students, parents and visitors to read. This project consciously addresses the school's core value of creativity and inquiry. **EW**



At the heart of it all is student empowerment and respect for the art.

Admissions

Katie Aufer,
Director of Admissions

What a Great Community

I am proud to have been welcomed into the Explorer West family this year as the Director of Admissions and to share this wonderful community with people in West Seattle and beyond! This year we are admitting our largest class of 6th grade students - 38! We welcome 47 new students to campus in the fall. Students who will be attending this school year hail from 41 different schools! We are confident they will be valuable members of our community and we look forward to their contributions at Explorer West.

Continued Economic and Geographic Diversity

Entering our 20th school year, we continue to excel at creating a unique middle school experience for all students in our community. This year, we have a surge of new students from South Seattle and South King County. Incoming students are from Seattle Public Schools, Highline School District, Tacoma Public Schools, NWAIS, and other private schools. We are proud to support 30% of our new families with financial aid and 32% of the whole school. Traditionally, we have enrolled two Rainier Scholars into each 7th grade class, and for 2015 we were able

to accept three, bringing our total of Rainier Scholars to five next year, and 26 families throughout our history. We thank the Crean/Edmonds Family for making it possible for us to continue to focus on diversity and access to our program for all students.

Engaging our community has been a priority this year. We welcomed NASA Space Ambassador, Ron Hobbs who presented to 100 people on exploring new frontiers in space - igniting the curiosity and creativity of our wider community. Our Spring Picnic and Graduation celebrations saw us fill the halls of our neighbor facility, Grace Church, with new students, excitement for a new year and words of wisdom from our graduates. Just as we are excited to see new families come in, we are proud of our new graduates who are going off to high schools from West Seattle to Southern California. The 2016 school year will see us celebrate and reflect on our first 20 years and the impact our Alumni has made in the world. This school year aims to make us all wonder how far will today's class go with the foundation they are building here at Explorer West. **EW**



Update from the Board President

Karen Kalzer
2015 Board President

On behalf of the Explorer West Board of Trustees, I am happy to reflect upon the work of your Board this year as well as our objectives for the upcoming year as the Board continues to fulfill its mandate: to hold in trust the school's future as well as its present. Who is the Board? The Explorer West Board is composed of parents of current students, parents of alumni students, alumni, and committed community members, all of whom care deeply about advancing the school's mission of developing academic, creative and social skills for a sustainable future.

Any success for our program begins and ends with our faculty. The Board opened the 2014-15 academic year with a Board/Faculty Retreat wherein we examined our concerns, hopes and dreams for future of Explorer West Middle School and for the Explorer West students. Once again, I was deeply impressed to see the dedication and love that the faculty brings to their work, in which they are led so capably by Mr. Hundley. It is this level of dedication that brings our program such richness as the Environmental Slam, the Young Playwright Festival, the writing association with the Richard Hugo House, the Debate Team, and the Change the World project.

The Board/Faculty Retreat also served to kick off the work of our Strategic Planning Committee as it began to formulate the next Plan for Explorer West. The Committee reached out to faculty, parents, community members and to the students themselves to answer the question: "What should Explorer West look and feel like in its future?" Annie Vasquez, Bob Dullea and Katherine DePuma will be using this valuable input in finalizing the new Strategic Plan.

The Board has added another strength to its membership with the addition of Diane Cook, who brings the grandparent perspective to our work. This year, as several members prepare to cycle off the Board, we will be reaching out to our parents and community to grow and strengthen our membership once again.

I was deeply impressed to see the dedication and love that the faculty brings to their work, in which they are led so capably by Mr. Hundley.

The work of the Development Committee this year, under the vision and leadership of Eric Eberhard, has been breathtaking. The Development Committee procured a large grant for the Rick Marting Endowment Fund that was contingent upon first receiving matching funds. I had no doubt that our Explorer West community would step up to the challenge, and I was right. Thank you once again for your generosity and support.

We are proud that Explorer West is able to dedicate 19% of its annual expenditures to financial aid, thanks to generous donations from our community.

The reward for our Board work is one that we are able to witness each year: the graduation of our 8th grade. The self-confidence, eloquence and eagerness of the students as they prepare to make their way in the wider world is evident and gratifying to us as it is to you.

You have many educational choices to make for your children; the entire Board thanks you for choosing Explorer West. **EW**

Fundraising

Eric Eberhard,

Board Development Committee chair

The 2014-2015 school year was an historic one for the school's fundraising efforts. We had strong support in our fundraising events and launched our permanent endowment to provide ongoing financial aid: The Rick Marting Endowment. This furthers our work consistent with our mission.

Annual Fund and Auction

The fall Annual Fund campaign was a great success and was once again supported by 100% of the Board and Faculty and 91% of our parents. We raised \$69,000 overall. Holly and Kevin Brown were the gracious and generous hosts of the party to celebrate the success of the Annual Fund which was held for the second year and was well attended by parents and Board members. We are grateful to the Browns for opening their home for the event. Our annual auction was once again an amazing night for our community and was very successful.

The Rick Marting Endowment

In the fall we received word from an anonymous donor that the school had been awarded a \$125,000 matching donation for the Rick Marting Endowment. Under the terms of the donation we had until June 15 to raise \$125,000, which would then be matched at 100%. We were very fortunate to receive lead gifts of \$50,000 from our very generous benefactor Benita Mooney and \$15,000 from the Doris Snyder Foundation. We are grateful to Bob Rebar for his help with these donations.

To build on this strong start, this year's Fund-a-Need item at the auction was to raise the remaining \$60,000 required to meet the match target. We were honored to have Rick attend the auction and share his vision for the school which he joined as a founding head and faculty member 20 years ago. The night's lead gift was \$10,000 from Phil Crean and Cora Edmonds. Four other families raised their paddles at the \$5,000 level and enthusiasm was high as the whole community participated in raising a total of \$79,800 for the Marting Endowment.

With the Benita Mooney and Doris Snyder gifts and the record-breaking auction results, we met the target for matching funds from the anonymous donor and have now received the match and invested all of the funds in the Rick Marting Endowment. Our goal is to award the first Marting scholarship in the fall of 2016 from the earnings generated by these investments.

Foundations

We are extremely grateful to the eight public and private foundations which supported our school through foundation grants this year. This is an all-time high number and their support has gone to our STEM programs including the science room renovation and robotics program, outdoor education, curriculum development and the Rick Marting Endowment.



Thank you

Thank you to everyone who donated throughout the year to support the school. Explorer West would not be able to meet the needs of our students without your generosity. **EW**

2014 - 2015 Financials

Financial Overview

Year Ending June 30, 2015

Unrestricted Revenue:

Tuition and Fees	79%	\$1,570,000
Fund Raising	6%	\$112,000
Release of Restricted Funds	14%	\$272,000
Other	1%	\$28,000
Total Unrestricted Revenue	100%	\$1,982,000

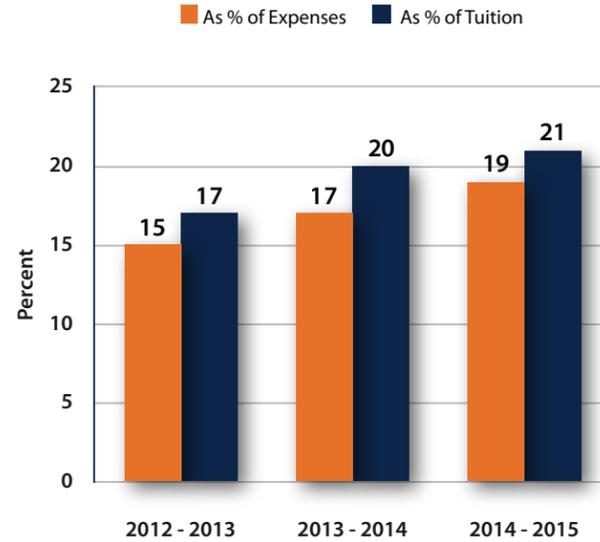
Expenses:

Salaries and Benefits	60%	\$1,084,000
Financial Aid	19%	\$332,000
Occupancy Costs	9%	\$164,000
Program Expenses	8%	\$137,000
Other	4%	\$71,000
Total Expenses	100%	\$1,788,000

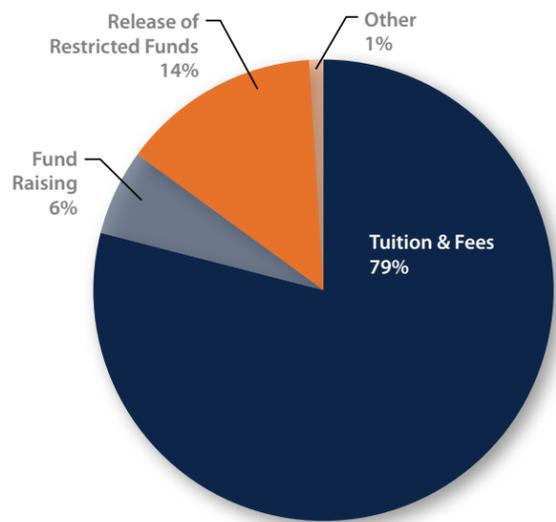
Net Increase in Unrestricted Net Assets	\$194,000
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Percentage of Tuition Allocated to Financial Aid

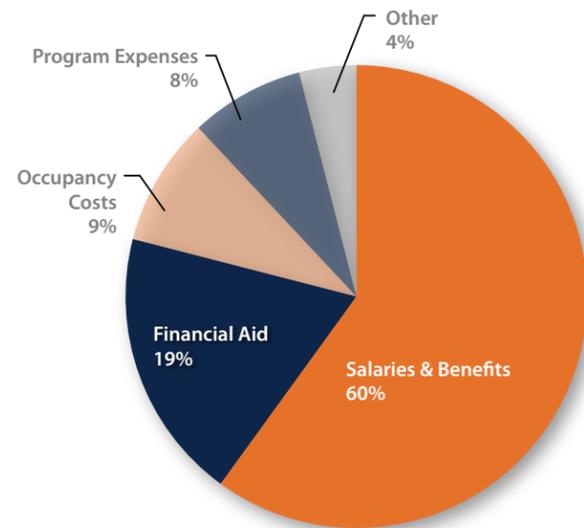
Explorer West's endowments allow us to allocate more tuition revenue to financial aid than most private schools in the Seattle area.



Unrestricted Revenue



Expenses



Farewell to the 8th Grade

The 2015 Graduates will be Attending these High Schools Next Fall:

Bishop Blanchet High School

John F. Kennedy Catholic High School

Raisbeck Aviation High School

Chief Sealth International High School

Lakeside School

Seattle Lutheran High School

Franklin High School

Mercer Island High School

Seattle Preparatory School

Holy Names Academy

Mount Rainier High School

University Prep

Idlywild Arts Academy

Nathan Hale High School

West Seattle High School

The Northwest School



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