



Monteverde Friends School/Escuela de los Amigos

January 2022

www.mfschool.org

We're Back!

Arrivals for our colegio student with temperature taking and 15 minutes later than primary arrivals.



Yes, we're back for second semester. More importantly, for the first time since March 2020, we have all of our students in classes on the same campus and full time. This marks the 5th semester in a row where we have reconfigured to a whole new format and schedule.

We were fortunate that space was available and the Cloud Forest School was willing to rent some of their classroom space so that we could meet social distancing requirements set by the Ministry of Education (MEP). We are delighted, though, to be all together on a single campus now.

Our sense of community across ages is restored. In particular, teachers who work with all ages (art, special education and gym) as well as our administrative staff are delighted not to be running back and forth between campuses.

Our high school Humanities teacher, Anastasia Shown, joined MFS this past semester, so had only taught at the other campus. On returning she comments, "I love watching the big kids watch the little kids. They can't help but smile. We needed to see more of those smiles after a tough time of transitions and pandemic life."

Grade 1/2 teacher, Melanie Martin, after 6 years at MFS, has taught many of our older students. She notes, "We are all one big family again! To finally be together after so long it feels beautiful and complete... just wonderful."

Our administrative staff had calculated that with a reduction to 3 foot spacing, we could fit all students in our MFS buildings. As COVID cases among the 5 million people of Costa Rica declined to less than 100 per day for the whole country for a good part of December, MEP removed distancing requirements.

We still have many restrictions in order to keep our students and staff safe. Colegio students remain in a single classroom with their grade throughout the day, only teachers move from room to room. This limits contact among grades. The only time students from different grades mix is for recess on the soccer field while staying fully masked, and even then, colegio and primary students do not mix. That way, if a student or staff member is exposed to or ill with COVID, only limited classes have to revert to virtual school.

Like many places around the world, Omicron infections hit Costa Rica just after Christmas. In just 4 weeks, new cases per day increased from less than 100 to more than 6,000. Like schools everywhere, we do our best to balance safety from infections with losses in education and social contact.

The last two years have taught us a lot about flexibility and the need to adapt, but this new semester feels like at least a baby step back to normalcy.

We are immensely grateful to all who responded to our year-end appeal.

Your generosity reminds us, once again, that we couldn't do this without all your support.

We wish you a healthy and fulfilling 2022.

Another Saga

At the end of the last school year, the Friends School of Portland, Maine (FSP) wanted to honor their Head of School, Jenny Rowe, who was retiring after 15 years at the school. We were amazed and delighted when they called the Monteverde Friends School, where Jenny had served as Head of School from 1999 to 2005, saying that they wanted to give us a gift of \$5,000 in Jenny's honor.

FSP had just one request: that we use the gift for something specific that our school needed. As you might imagine, we had several ideas. At the recommendation of Maggie Fatovic, our Assistant Director for Academics, we decided to purchase the Level Literacy Intervention curriculum.

As Maggie points out, "Many of our students are not native English speakers, and coupled with almost a year of hybrid and virtual school, students were falling behind in their reading skills in English."

Based on her previous experience as a Special Education teacher and intervention coordinator, Maggie recommended the Level Literacy Intervention curriculum (<https://www.fountasandpinnell.com/intervention/>).

"Doing this work, I had researched many curriculums and this program has high efficacy and excellent student results...I have also used this program in the past and have seen the quick gains students can make in their literacy skills. This program comes with so many materials, that teachers can target specific literacy skills." Maggie says.

Recommending and shopping for the curriculum was the easy part. It turned out that the order included 12 boxes, each weighing 30 to 40 pounds. Not something we could ask travelers to bring in their suitcases, which is our "preferred" shipping method!

It took six months to arrange for transport in the midst of pandemic restrictions, which included getting stuck in the shipping traffic jams. But last week, the curriculum finally arrived last, much to our delight.

Training teachers to use the curriculum will be the next step, then it will be put to use this semester.

"I plan on training both teachers and classroom volunteers in the upcoming weeks. I would like all the primary teachers to be trained in this program, so that it can be used to fidelity for years to come," Maggie notes. "Because



That's Maggie smiling as the curriculum is delivered at last.

the program comes with complete lesson plans and prepared materials, teachers have very little to prepare with LLI. This makes teachers lives so much easier!"

Thank you, thank you, thank you Friends School of Portland and Jenny Rowe!

