



Monteverde Friends School/Escuela de los Amigos

September, 2023

www.mfschool.org

The month of September has flown by, particularly given a number of Costa Rican holidays. Somehow, we have fit in a lot of learning, as there are just two more weeks left in our first term.

It has long been the practice that as each term ends, teachers prepare summary comments on each student, their progress, any issues, and thoughts for the future. Then, the two days following the last day of the term, teachers meet with parents.

While teachers are busy teaching and preparing those reports, administration is already looking forward to the 2024-25 school year. During the pandemic, such preparations couldn't be started too early, as things could totally change. But now, with some stability, we want the process of assessing who will be here next year to start early in the new calendar year. That way, both the school and school families are better able to plan ahead.

We hope you will read on to understand what that annual process involves, and to share a bit of this month's celebrations.



Click the picture for a video of our students dancing in the Independence Day Parade

What Goes Into Preparations for the Next School Year?

We've only just begun the current school year, but already we are busy preparing for next year. We want to outline that process so that our many supporters understand when we ask for support.

Each year, we work through projected labor costs (90% are salary-related), tuition levels, filling any openings for new students, and determining who gets financial aid and how much. These are important inputs to how much financial aid we can offer. We fundraise throughout the year to cover the financial aid needs of our local Monteverde families.

Help us meet a \$15,000 challenge to fund financial aid!

A generous family has donated \$15,000 and asks: Could our other donors add \$15,000 in the next few weeks to double the impact of their gift?

Please help us meet that challenge!

Gifts of all sizes are welcome!
Small or large, they help all

Our 2023-24 financial aid gives a picture of what is involved in that fundraising. Financial aid for 33 students this year (28% of our student body) totals \$118,000, with families covering at least 25% of their child's tuition. Even with that much aid, we needed to find additional sponsors for a couple of students who would not be able to continue without further help.

Our tuition varies by grade but averages \$3,200 per year for primary grades and \$5,700 for grades 7-12. Reflecting the Costa Rican economy, these are just a small fraction of tuition at private schools in the U.S. -- but still steep for local families.

In January, we look at the total donations for the previous calendar year. That sets a budget for financial aid and guides our School Committee (i.e. our board) as they set tuition for the following school year.

Also in January, we ask parents for a preliminary indication of whether their students will be continuing the following school year. With that information, our Head of School determines how many openings we might have for the following year.

our current students continue next year.

For international, tax-deductible gifts:

In the United States:

Give online through

[Network for Good](#) or

[Paypal](#)

or mail a check to

Jenny Rowe,

Monteverde Friends, U.S.,

PO Box 2153,

Campton, NH 03223

In Canada:

Give through **Canada Helps**,

send a check via **Interac**,

or mail to

MEF | 1305 Cedar | Nelson,

BC V1L 2E7

With our school so full in recent years, there are typically only a half-dozen or fewer openings for the following year. With so few openings, it doesn't make sense for families on our waiting list to fill out full applications. Instead, we offer a short form where we [collect contact information](#) along with what grade potential students would be in. Our Head of School checks that form to find applicants whose age and grade level match openings, and gets in touch with families to see whether a full application would make sense. Once full applications are received, we evaluate them and determine which students will join us.

During February, financial aid applications for the following year are due. Families must provide detailed documentation for the family's sources and amounts of income. Our Financial Aid committee uses a model to analyze that information to determine by the end of March which families need help. They then meet to make difficult decisions on which families we can help, and how much support we can offer each family.

With that information in hand, families can then confirm which students will attend the following year, allowing our administrators to assess staffing needs. Teachers are asked to indicate whether they will continue with us, and when necessary, MFS recruits new teachers.

Phew! What a process year after year -- but that's what it takes to keep providing our vital service to the Monteverde community.

You, our donors are key in giving us the ability to serve many local students.

Independence Day As History Lesson



Each year, Costa Rican Independence Day is on September 15th. It is a great time for our students to learn their country's history.

For example, they can look at how Costa Rica got its name.

There are two different accounts. More often, it is attributed to Christopher Columbus, who visited Costa Rica's Caribbean coast in 1502. Noting its natural beauty, he named it Costa Rica, rich coast. His main observation, though, was how much gold the small number of indigenous people wore. Another account attributes the country's name to Gil González Dávila, a conquistador who visited the Pacific coast in 1520 and began a long period of mining the gold and other resources to Spain's advantage.

Either way, what are now Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica were claimed by Spain as their territory. Costa Rica's distance from Guatemala, where a regional colonial government was established and its sparse indigenous population sheltered Costa Rica a bit. Central America continued as a territory of Spain from the 15th through 19th century, but with the Mexican war that liberated Mexico from Spain, the Central American communities wanted liberty as well.

With no war but a declaration instead, the five countries gained independence in 1821. There were initial efforts to rule the whole area as one country or as a republic with multiple states, but with few roads and no railroads at the time, it was difficult to bring them together. By 1840, the area had broken into the countries we see today.

Children and teenagers play a primary role in celebrating the holiday, mainly through a torch run and a parade.

The torch run traces the route that messengers traveled in 1821 to announce independence from Spain. Back then, with little in the way of roads, it took a month before they reached Costa Rica. Each year, students from all five countries participate in torch runs that trace the route of the messengers starting in Guatemala and continuing through Honduras, El Salvador, and Nicaragua, then reaching Costa Rica -- about 1,000 kilometers!

Like many other schools, our MFS students play a role each year. Starting with our oldest students, traveled to a connecting spot during the evening of September 13th. After an initial ceremony, they picked up their torch and headed up the mountain, running all night into the morning to get close to Monteverde. As they drew close, younger students joined in, with each class carrying the torch for a segment of the route. When everyone reached the school, we had a ceremony and sang patriotic songs.

On September 15th, the main event is a parade in nearby Santa Elena. Area schools participate with marching bands and traditional dances. Our MFS students had been preparing since the beginning of school, and their dedication showed as they performed beautiful dances in traditional dress, often whirling their long skirts. While they did that, younger students handed out candy and flowers to the crowds that lined the street.

What great ways to learn about the history of their country!

