



ANNUAL REPORT

**2021-
2022**



MISSION & PHILOSOPHY

Ruth Washburn Cooperative Nursery School (RWCNS) is a non-profit preschool dedicated to educating and nurturing children in an enriching play-based environment and engaging families in a supportive community.

At RWCNS we value:

- The nursery school years as unique and important;
- A “whole child” approach to early childhood education wherein emotional, physical, social, and cognitive needs are equally significant;
- Equitable learning opportunities that are tailored to each child’s needs;
- An inclusive school environment that embraces diversity;
- Child-directed learning that happens organically in enriched environments;
- Our role as leaders in early childhood education; and
- Families and their contributions to classrooms and the school community.

We embody these values by:

- Trusting the nursery school model, knowing that developmentally-appropriate play is the best preparation for future schooling;
- Encouraging children to choose and direct their own work by providing engaging materials, open-ended opportunities, outdoor exploration, and interactions with peers;
- Attending to emotional, physical, social, and cognitive needs with equal care and attention;
- Modeling caring interactions that teach children to identify and meet their own needs;
- Hosting professional development and sharing best practices with the early education community;
- Embracing the cooperative community model to provide the richest, most caring environment possible for children and their families; and
- Providing ongoing opportunities for family education and support.

Why are we called Ruth Washburn Cooperative Nursery School?

- **Ruth Washburn:** Dr. Washburn was an acclaimed child psychologist and the aunt of our school’s founder.
- **Cooperative:** Including families as part of the school benefits everyone.
- **Nursery:** We honor the child’s stage at this moment in time.
- **School:** Incredible learning takes place every day through play.

If you need to reach out to the board, you can contact our Cooperative Liaison-Karen Brown (long time staff and now board member) at mtnbrownskaren@gmail.com



LETTER FROM THE BOARD

The 2021–2022 school year marked Ruth Washburn’s 61st year of operation...and what a year it was! In the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic, we continued to navigate uncharted territory, remained nimble enough to follow constantly changing health department requirements, remained financially solvent, and got back to “normal” as quickly as possible. We kept our doors open, welcomed family helpers back into classrooms, and figured out how to meet and greet each other from behind our masks and at the exterior doors of classrooms. We are so deeply grateful to our dedicated administrators, teachers, and families who stuck together through such dark and uncertain times. We couldn’t have made it without your hard work. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

During the 2021–22 school year we completed our three–year Strategic Plan (2021–2023) and developed the current, 2023–2025 Strategic Plan. Written in the height of the pandemic, the 2021–2023 Strategic Plan focused on how to preserve “The Ruth Washburn Way”—our school’s culture and identity—so that we could return to normal as soon as possible, without losing the intangible essence of what makes Ruth Washburn such a special place. We formed The Ruth Washburn Way Committee, comprised of current and former families, staff, Equity Committee members, and Board members. Their assignment was to define and document the “Ruth Washburn Way.”

They accomplished the task. The resulting document ([LINK HERE](#)) is such a heart–lifting, insightful, and useful guide to the what, how, and why behind everything we do at Ruth Washburn. It is truly inspirational. We are so grateful to The Ruth Washburn Way Committee for completing such an incredible project. We know this document will inspire many families, teachers, and care givers to lean into The Ruth Washburn Way for years and years to come.

The following pages highlight other accomplishments from the 2021–2022 school year, including several property improvement projects and a very fond farewell to Mary Jean Coyne, who retired after more than 20 years at Ruth Washburn. You’ll also find a letter from our outgoing Executive Director, Jen, who plans to retire in December 2023. We know you’ll join us in wishing her the very best on her new adventure. As the last few years have demonstrated without a doubt, change is inevitable, but The Ruth Washburn Way endures.

Thank you for all you do to make The Ruth Washburn Way come alive in our building, on our playground, and in our Cooperative. We are so lucky and so grateful to share this vision and mission with each of you. And we’re so, so happy to be bumping elbows in the kitchen with you again while trying to scrub sun–nut butter off those purple plates. Some things never change after all!

Warmly,
Hannah Egger, President





LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

I walked in the doors of Ruth Washburn Cooperative Nursery School for the first time more than 16 years ago. I was at the school with a group of my high school students who wanted to see what a cooperative was all about. I walked out absolutely enamored by the school, the staff, and the philosophy that was apparent everywhere we looked. I immediately called a friend so she could get her child on the waitlist. Fast forward three years and that same friend reached out to let me know that Ruth Washburn was looking for a new school director. I had been teaching high school and college at that time, but was very excited at the prospect of working at this high quality preschool. I was hired that summer to be the Assistant Director and have been happily ensconced at the school ever since.

When our beloved former Director, Sukie Jackson decided she truly wanted to go back to being a classroom teacher, I was nervous but excited about becoming the “new” director. At that time, the school had been through several shorter-term directors and I felt strongly that I wanted to make a ten-year commitment to the role. I also feel that after ten years, it is time for new leadership and fresh ideas. Next year will be my 13th and final year at Ruth Washburn (my 10th as director). I am intending for my last day to be no later than December 31, 2023.

The Board of Governors has long been aware of my end date and has a fabulous transition plan in place with built in overlap time for the new Executive Director to begin their role here with support. I have loved my time at Ruth Washburn and have robust plans and goals to move forward in the next year. I plan to be fully present during this time and am so excited to really enjoy my last year at this amazing institution.

I often get asked what my future holds. Truly, at this point I am unsure. I have always worked in education so it is probable I will continue in that field, but I am open to all opportunities that crop up. My sons and daughter-in-law have all moved out of state in the last year so a move may be in our future as well. Please reach out with any questions and just know that I am so honored to have been a part of Ruth Washburn for the past decade.

Sincerely,
Jen Filonowich

PARKING LOT PROJECT

Now that the parking lot is all fixed and perfect, it's kind of hard to remember that it was a major challenge for many, many years! But, I'm here to remind you, lest the beauty of the current perfection lose its luster too soon!

Last spring, Jen, along with some savvy Cooperative families and Board members, undertook an operation worthy of a think tank: how to create a meaningful number of additional parking spaces without destroying the Farm, disrupting traffic flow patterns, or removing tons of earth (literally) from the Hillside. Somehow, that group of brilliant minds did it. The fix was a long time in coming, and like all great fixes, is so beautiful and seamless you hardly notice it's there.

They figured out how to squeeze 11 more parking spaces into the existing parking lot footprint, and at the same time eliminate Jen's weed whacking nemesis: the tumbleweed berm on the east side of the property. Best of all, our teachers and staff—whom we ADORE!—no longer have to park on the street risking life, limb, and property to get to and from work. The additional spaces and staggered start/end times for classes means everybody that needs to can fit into the parking lot at any given time. It's as if the decades of real life Frogger across 19th street never even happened! Death defying parking, false starts opening car doors into traffic, and sweat-inducing sprints across lanes of moving cars... We old-timers remember, and we don't miss it for a second! Though I will admit, sometimes I do a few old-school parking lot laps (in the north entrance, out the south entrance), "looking for a spot" just for old-time's sake. I'm super happy that new families and staff have zero understanding of what the heck I'm doing, or why!

Thank you to the brilliant minds who solved this problem, and to Colorado Office of Early Childhood for the facility improvement dollars that made it possible.





Jason Bell



Hailey Blanchette



Mahala Chumaceiro



Caitlin Collins



Kirsten Encarnacion

Our Teaching Staff

We had many former staff retire or move out of the area in the past few years so have added some amazing new folks! Say hello to all our current teaching staff!



Christiana Fanaro



Lori Goodwin



Silke Howarth



Jeanie Jungbauer



Jessica Kuykendall



Morgan Phillips



Debbie Rogosich



Katie Ross



Kiley Rush



Tyler Smith



Erin Stewart-Patton



Lauren Troiani

LANDSCAPING PROJECT

Our beloved Ruth Washburn back yard always needs updating, erosion mitigation, and lots of landscaping TLC. Last year we took on a bigger landscaping project to make the space a bit easier for families to manage walking and for the outdoor class to have some flatter spaces. We have been so fortunate to have the Underhill family as a part of the cooperative for many years and they were able to complete this big landscaping project through their landscaping company, Irrigation Gurus. They added large flagstones to create a walkway from the front gate all the way to the deck. They added terracing steps to create less trip and fall hazards and also terraced some areas under the juniper bushes to provide more flat space for the outdoor Crickets class to play. They also did a ton of hidden work for water drainage (always our biggest challenge). They added drainage pipes, traps, and screens to the area under the water feature. This has definitely made our backyard walking path less muddy, more stable, and easier to manage. Thank you to the Underhill family for all the work you did to make our space a ton more usable!



MARY JEAN COYNE

In 2022, Mary Jean Coyne retired after more than 20 years at RWCNS. Over the years, Mary Jean has been a classroom and Wee Explorers teacher, a Pyramid Plus Approach Coach, a Positive Solutions for Families Facilitator, and a substitute teacher. For those of you who know and love Mary Jean, I share your heart-felt appreciation for all the ways she has helped your family over the years. For those of you who don't know her, I hope to offer you a glimpse into what an incredible person, teacher, mentor, and friend she has been to our Cooperative community for so long.

First, an anecdote from Karen Brown, retired Ruth Washburn teacher and current Board member. She was on the hiring committee when Mary Jean interviewed for a teaching position. She recalls that after the interview, the committee members gave Mary Jean the standard, "Thank you; we'll get back to you," line. But as soon as she left the room, the hiring committee realized she was IT, and Karen literally ran into the parking lot after her to offer her a position. Thank goodness she took the offer!

Mary Jean taught my oldest kiddo in Wee Explorers about eight years ago. From the moment we met her, she shepherded our family into the broader RWCNS family in her gentle and endearing way. When my kid was about five, he even suggested that her name should be Ruth Washburn because, in his words, "She is what my school is all about." I couldn't put it better myself.

I asked my husband for his input for this letter and he had two things to say, "Mary Jean knows my name! I've only met her like, twice. How does she do that?" And, "Thanks to her, we had a bazillion worms in our garage, which is pretty cool." Both are true. She does manage to greet us all by name every single time she sees us, even though we haven't been in her class for more than eight years. And, she did give us a small handful of red wiggler composting worms that lived quite happily, eating kitchen scraps, and breeding in a comfy Tupperware container in our garage for many years.

One day at Wee Explorers, Mary Jean told the kiddos that she had some amazing and unusual pets. In a quiet, almost conspiratorial tone she said, "They are very quiet, don't like sunshine, require very little attention, and live in a plastic bucket!" The kids (and grown-ups) were completely riveted! She slowly opened the bucket and there was a pile of rich, dark dirt and a bunch of worms! She gave each kiddo a small bag with bits of old produce (banana peel, grape stems, coffee filter, etc.) and they took turns feeding her pets. We thought that was pretty much the coolest thing ever! So, in classic Mary Jean fashion, she invited us to adopt a few worms, assured me they are easy first pets for little people to care for, and got us totally on board with the project. For years afterwards, we adopted out handfuls of worms to interested neighbors with small children. I gave them the same speech she gave me. Mary Jean taught me how.

Which brings me to my final thought: Mary Jean has made me a better parent. Watching how she works with children, how she speaks with them, how she engages them, and how she keeps them safe, has taught me so, so much about how to be a better parent. I conjure her tone, her words, and her joy in my best moments as a parent. And I reach for them in the most challenging times.

So, Mary Jean, here is a big, big thank you, for all the ways you've helped our school, our families, our teachers, and most of all, our children. Your influence and impact will ripple through our families for years and years to come. Ruth Washburn will always be your school.

Suzanne Dillon
and the whole Dillon Mann family
(all of whom you somehow know by name)





FINANCIALS

Total Income
\$656,099.76

Total Expenses
\$602,995.43

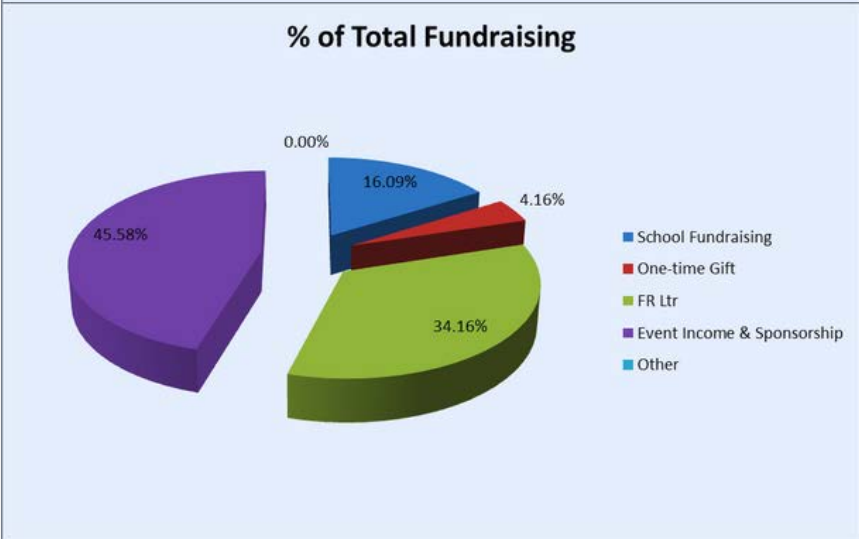
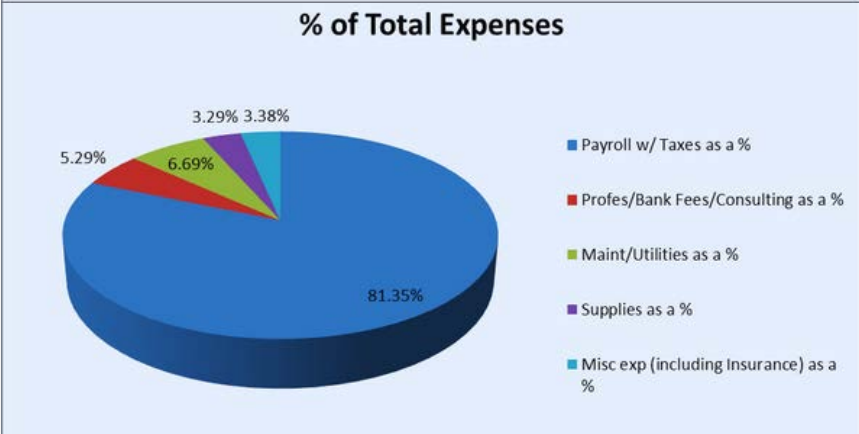
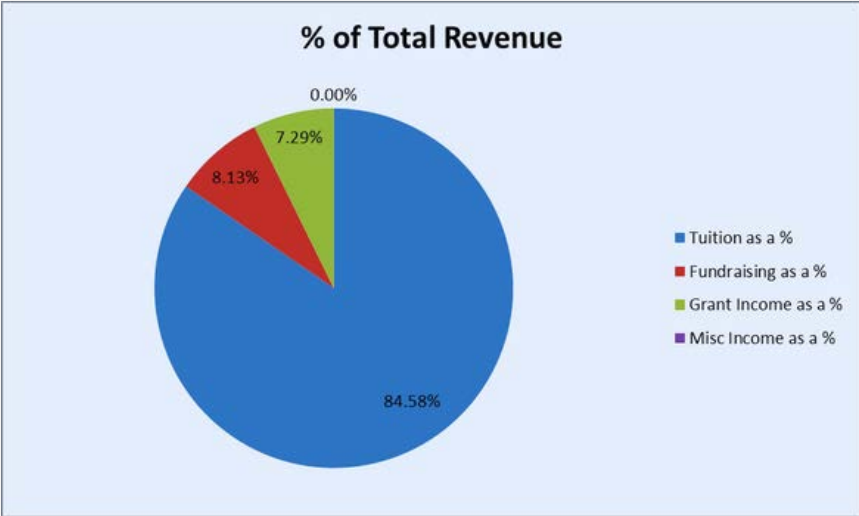
Retained Earnings
\$53,104.33

What did we do with those retained earnings?

Parking Lot
\$39,000.00

Staff Retention Bonuses
\$8,000.00

Landscaping Project
\$6,104.33



Letter from our Treasurer, Judy Van Valin

I was reflecting on my time as Treasurer and how much effect COVID had on our little school. I think it is amazing that we came through the pandemic in such great shape. We certainly had our share of bumps along the way. None of us probably ever thought we would live during a pandemic; I certainly never entertained the possibility! The Cooperative, for the most part, stuck it out and continued entrusting their children to our care. It was tricky. Following health department requirements was stressful for everyone. It was tough on families and children to have a child sent home every time they sniffled, had a runny nose or a cough. The staff did their best to meet the children's needs and the parents' needs while following COVID rules to keep everyone safe. The Administrators really had their hands full as front line people, chipping in on sanitizing and trying to soothe everyone. They also decreased their work hours, which meant a decrease in pay, to keep the school financially solvent. Our focus on children and families, along with strong leadership, dedicated staff, and a strong Board kept us moving in the right direction! It was such a stressful time but we should be proud of how strong we are now!