

Centro Educativo

FUTURO VERDE

MARCH, 2021

2020 ANNUAL REPORT



Inspiration. Dedication. Innovation.



Mission

We are a bilingual, international school where students are encouraged to be reflective learners who – through processes of inquiry and critical thinking – develop the knowledge needed to address global issues related to social justice, intercultural relations, and the environment.

Vision

To be a progressive, international, and bilingual institution with a dedicated, supportive, and humanist community that strives to peacefully promote a harmonious world.



From our Director

Lural Ramírez



"It is not by looking at things, but by dwelling in them, that we understand their joint meaning". - Michael Polanyi

Lural Ramírez
Director

2020- The Challenge of Perspective

Making sense of this year can seem like an insurmountable challenge, but finding meaning in our response to the year, as both individuals and in our accountability to others, quickly became my personal purpose and driving light throughout the months of pandemic response that have defined the 2020 school year. What were the opportunities we had within the challenges we were facing? Could we keep the perspective needed to remain true to our school's aspirational mission and vision, despite the immediate struggles we were facing?

When I think of how Futuro Verde's response to this crisis might differ from that of other schools around the world, I feel grateful to know that the investment we had made in one another in happier and easier times, the work we had done to set our students up for success as independent and critical thinkers and the trust and loving relationships we had built with our families truly brought us through the ongoing challenges we faced this year. But, even with the financial, pedagogical and organizational preparation we were fortunate to have in place pre-pandemic, we were still faced with the choice of *how* we might manage the stress, the loss, the disappointment and the constant change we were experiencing.

An important reflection, in those hard moments, would often come into my mind. *Can it be that the formidable challenges in our lives happen **for us** and not **to us**?* Every day our school community made the choice to keep our feet firmly on the ground, our hearts open, our minds set in critical analysis and our hands busy with the day's urgency and needs. We forged forward, adapting and changing as needed, but not letting our hopes and dreams slip away, instead choosing to put one foot in front of the other each and every day and actively making the choice to maintain hope in the face of great uncertainty and difficulty.

It has been an absolute honor and a pleasure to have been Futuro Verde's school leader for the past seven years. I am proud of our inspiring school community and I am confident that the future for our children, for our families and for our school will be bright!



Board Treasurer

Laura Fidler

During 2020, quite possibly the most unpredictable year ever to face humanity, I took comfort in a few predictable things. First, the rhythm of my 8th grade daughter's life continued uninterrupted due to the quick response and creative thinking of our faculty. Second, our values as a community shone bright as we came together to support our children and our school. Third, we were gentle with each other throughout this year of crisis, diminishing the fear promulgated by the media, instead embracing resiliency. We complete this unprecedented year successfully, with healthy, supported staff who, with your help, we have been fortunate to retain for next year. We have enough money to meet our immediate needs and confidence that our resources will be sufficient to continue providing excellent service to our children. We have seen just how resilient our staff, our administration, our landlord, our parents, our donors, our sponsors and our board can be. We have, together, risen above. I look forward to witnessing our potential in 2021.

Thank you all for your part in forming our heroic Futuro Verde family!

Laura Fidler
Board Treasurer, Asociación Escuela Futuro Verde

Board Members



Enrico Reolon, President



Ginette Poirier, Secretary
(outgoing)



Jennifer Middleton, Secretary
(incoming)



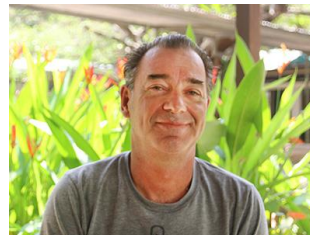
Sonya Donchick, Vice President



Mario Matarrita, Comptroller



Brad Shaw, Vocal I



Georges Lefebvre, Vocal II



Christina Aguinalalde, Vocal III

The Board in Action, During a Crisis

During this unprecedented time of crisis, our Board of directors played a crucial role in keeping lines of communication open with families and generating funds to keep the school alive. As a whole, the Board of directors came together in solidarity and communicated almost daily to ensure that the school would make it through this difficult time. A few of their reflections and roles are shared below.

Enrico Reolon, Board President

Rico shared the many challenges faced during this time. These challenges included the agony of watching enrollment numbers continuously drop, hearing the financial struggles of parents who were left with no choice but to withdraw their child, and keeping staff and students interested and involved using an online modality of teaching, which was so new to many and required much patience and flexibility. Determined to keep the school afloat and not sure how long school closures would last, Enrico spent many hours making phone calls to friends and family looking to raise money for the school. Rico was successful in raising some emergency funds for the school, however, it was very difficult due to the fact that many people themselves were in a similar financial crisis and simply were not in a position to assist. Nevertheless, he is very grateful for the generosity of those that donated. In reflecting on all the hardships faced during the 2020 school year, Rico was also reminded of all the positives that came of this unfortunate situation. To name a few, the leadership of the director was outstanding and enduring, the teachers' loyalty and solidarity was heartwarming, the students' discipline and hard work was astonishing, and the togetherness of the board of directors was remarkable. Everyone involved came together with one main thing in common, their love for Futuro Verde.

Sonya Danchik, Board Vice President

Sonya took on many roles during this time. One of her main responsibilities was supporting and checking in on the director. She spoke with her daily in order to ensure her well-being. The director was working longer hours than ever, with a high level of stress, so Sonya was keen on making sure she was taking care of herself. Sonya also helped to brainstorm ideas of how to reopen the school during the later part of the school year. She suggested the idea of obtaining the permit for the recreational center, like she did in her school, Only Love. Once successfully obtaining the permit, Futuro Verde was then able to open its doors to students and although, in a different capacity, parents and students alike were pleased to have the opportunity to return to campus. Lastly, Sonya facilitated communication amongst parents, teachers, and the board itself. For Example, she spent hours on the phone daily, talking to parents, listening to them and allowing them to feel heard. Sonya's strong leadership during this time is much appreciated by all.

Brad Shaw, Board Vocal

Brad also played an important role in communication, especially with the families of Futuro Verde. His goal was to reach out and check in on individual families. Before making contact with families, he felt very anxious and unsure of how parents would respond. He made numerous phone calls and he was pleasantly surprised to find that many people were very understanding of the school's financial situation and were overall very supportive. Although it was a time of great uncertainty, he felt that the vast majority of people wanted to pull together and fight for a good education for their children. Brad's willingness to help and his everlasting commitment is highly valued by the Futuro Verde community.



The IB Diploma Program

Khalida Lockheed, IB Coordinator

The 2020 school year began with motivated and engaged students, 12th graders prepared to tackle their final year with the many assessments to submit and culminating in formal exams, sent from the UK with all the security protocols required by the IB. 11th graders were eager to begin their IB journey, excited about their new uniforms and enthusiastic to take on the challenges introduced by the diploma programme and the high standards they set for themselves.

On March 17th, with the increasing cases of this new virus, COVID-19, tearing through Europe and bleeding into the Americas, the Ministry of Education officially suspended in-person classes. The initial suspension was for a few weeks, which then extended to the end of May, then to August 1st, then finally for the full year. How to ensure IB students' successful completion of the programme and continued progress for our year one students?

For secondary students, what began as a fun opportunity to sleep in a little later and to wear pajamas all day when we transitioned to online classes, became an overwhelming challenge to maintain engagement and momentum which required a never before experienced implementation of ATLs (Approaches to Learning): self management, communication, and investigation, in particular. And for IB students, this was even more critical, and challenging.

After three months of online learning, and the application of Mock exams to our 12th graders, it became clear that they were in desperate need of support. Students had become overwhelmed and disengaged. They had become alarmingly behind. Fast approaching was the first official IB deadline to submit assessment tasks and it was clear that without intervention and response from the school and families, they were in dire risk of not attaining their diplomas. Things were serious and many of our 12th graders were ready to throw in the towel.

Through a targeted response, individualized support and attention each day (including weekends), twice daily check ins with students on progress, they were able to successfully complete their tasks. Families were brought into the process and were tasked with tangible support in the form of transportation, food, access to reliable internet, etc. By the beginning of September, the students' progress improved, work was handed in, things were looking up! However, what was most notable and wonderful to watch, was the transformation of the students' mental health and development as students and people. And, furthermore, not only did they grow, but through their transformation, we were transformed as teachers.

During the last trimester, as it became clear that we would not be returning to in person instruction, and certainly not able to offer the Integrated Arts class which we had been planning, we opted to provide explicit instruction of ATLs to our students from 9th - 12th grades. For our IB DP students, this became the space for them to learn practical skills to help them manage their many tasks and assessments and strategies to effectively study for their exams. As the IB intends, these "approaches to learning" skills will serve them in their lives as university students and beyond.



Teacher Profiles

Meet some of our fantastic teachers and learn about their pandemic experience

Jennifer Concepción McLennan

Preschool/Primary teacher



To say that the 2020 school has been challenging would be the literal understatement of the year! From a personal perspective I was finishing a Master's thesis while adapting my curriculum to an online, and later blended, learning format. I was working with my own three children to ensure that they were meeting their online learning goals. It was heart-breaking to be separated from family in Canada (my country of origin) while worrying about their health and that of my nuclear family members. As an individual and as a teaching staff member I have needed to be more communicative, more flexible and more open to change than ever before.

The incredible gift that 2020 has given me is this: the knowledge that I CAN be communicative, I CAN be flexible and I CAN be open to change. I am more resilient than I thought possible, and I am more capable than I ever imagined. While this year has brought stress, anxiety and suffering, it has also brought opportunities for empathy, generosity and growth. I, along with my kids and students, am choosing to focus on what it is that we can do day by day to help ourselves, our families, our school and our community to get through to the other side of this worldwide pandemic.

The unique thing about the COVID-19 response at Futuro Verde was that we were able to consistently keep the holistic needs of our students at the forefront of all decisions made. As a school we recognized that, while academics are of course the main focus of formal education, students also need to have their emotional, creative and physical needs met. Students maintained access to art classes, mindfulness practices, and physical education throughout the various phases of pandemic protocols. From an insider's perspective, I can say with full confidence that this student focus was maintained throughout the school year. I am proud to be a part of what is happening at Futuro Verde, and I look forward to the new challenges and opportunities that 2021 will bring.

Fiona McLellan

Middle years science, health and environmental education teacher



Wow. What can you say about a year like this? If anything, it has been a challenge, jam packed with learning and emotions.

From the start not much changed in my daily routine. I kept coming to school as normal. It was strange to be one of the few people present at school each day. I remember being alone one morning and realising that I really missed the kids. We had enough to keep us busy adapting, learning and helping each other out. We were quickly online, opening accounts up everywhere even my password page in my planner had to

adapt. It was so full that I had to pimp it up by sticking another page to it.

It was amazing to see the kids come back to school when our recreational permit was approved. Their smiles were contagious. The atmosphere was buzzing. Fewer children were present so everyone got to know each other well and I have really appreciated this quality time with students and staff.

I will be ever grateful to my colleagues for their support. They have shown amazing dedication and have continued to learn and teach throughout this topsy turvy year.

Doris Prendas Rodríguez

Elementary school teacher



If I were to describe the 2020 teaching and learning experience, I would use the words challenge, resilience and growth.

The pillars of education (teachers) demonstrated great strength by adapting to sudden changes, adjustments and skills that required us to quickly become experts in order to teach our students. The individual and collective commitment to meet the needs of distance learning in the educational community of Futuro Verde was impressive! Love and dedication were definitely key to fulfilling our roles as teachers this year, which suddenly became more difficult than usual.

We cannot leave out the role of responsible families. I know that families did their best to support their children in whatever was not possible in distance learning. It was a pleasure to work together and help them develop routines and plans to help their children with attitude changes. I felt helpful by offering solutions from my own experience. During the first trimester of online education, I had to battle with my teenager constantly. He was facing academic difficulties, but mostly difficulties with discipline and independence. This demanded a lot of my time to intervene until my son acquired both technological and independent work skills. I applied discipline measures, but mainly strategies based on the theory of the psychologist and philosopher B.F. Skinner, on positive reinforcement, which I recommended to families.

I believe we all make mistakes, but who doesn't make mistakes when learning something new? I think that this is a time to reflect. In whatever role you play, think about how to improve, without forgetting to be grateful for all that we have achieved. I feel very proud to have finished a year where I know that we managed to overcome the obstacles successfully and I hope that the next year will be much better for everyone.

Student Profiles

Meet a student from each of our sections and learn about their pandemic experience

It has often been said throughout the pandemic that we are all in the same storm but it is important to remember that in the storm that has been the global pandemic of 2020, we are all in very different boats as we weather this storm. You might wonder what the experience of being a student has been like during this unprecedented time? I had the pleasure of sitting down with a selection of our fantastic students to hear from them what this year has been like. I wondered what they thought of the changes that have come, what they had most struggled with and what their moments of joy were. As I sat with students to hear their stories, I was again amazed at how resilient and strong children truly are and how capable they are of adapting to great and unexpected change! And, of course, this does not happen in isolation, they have been fortunate to have the support of their loving families and teachers along the way!

Enjoy this selection of interviews with students born and raised in Costa Rica, students who are from afar, students on full or partial scholarship and students who have faced challenges that you may be surprised to learn they were able to overcome! Hats off to you all, FV students! We are SO very proud of you all!

Meet Antonio

Primary, 1st grade



"At the beginning of the year everything was good and I was in first grade and I was nervous because I had some new classmates. I liked coming to class every day, playing with my friends, doing math and going to physical education. Then one day I saw on TV that we couldn't go to school anymore and I felt angry and sad. For many months I was at home and it was very boring. I couldn't go outside, see my friends or do anything. I had to do my assignments on the computer. I would get up, eat breakfast, brush my teeth, take a bath and my mom would start helping me with my schoolwork, but my mom also had to work so sometimes it was difficult because my mom was busy working and couldn't help me. When I started going to the recreation program and CAI it was better, because I didn't have to be alone and glued to the laptop light for so long. Thinking about the whole year, I didn't like being on Seesaw very much because sometimes I got bored being cooped up by myself. I like being outside better, in the open air. What I liked best was going back to Futuro Verde and giving my eyes a break from the screen."

Meet Quetzal

Elementary, 5th grade

"This year was fun sometimes and then it was also really hard. We had normal school first and I remember that I was sick on the last day before school was cancelled. They said it wouldn't last, but in the end it has been the whole year almost of online learning. Eventually we could come back for rec programming and CAI and that was nice to see teachers and my friends. My parents (FV director, Lural Ramírez, and FV PE teacher and Athletic Director, Alejandro Ramírez) worked during the whole pandemic and they couldn't help me with school but I was okay because I just figured it out and could ask my teachers questions on Google Hangouts or in Zoom classes. It was a bit hard at first, but I just figured it out and then it even started to feel normal. When the rec program started I would just come to school on my bicycle and then home again. The hardest part of the year was math online because I couldn't always understand and it was hard for my teachers to explain things to me. Also, I missed my friends and being able to talk to them. It was fun to stay in my pajamas all day sometimes though!"



Meet Samantha

Middle Years, 7th grade

"This school year was an interesting one! When I found out that there was a pandemic, I felt very afraid. I had been so excited to start middle school and I felt concerned that I wouldn't do well with my studies if I didn't have my teachers there to help me. When we went online, it was hard to adapt and communication was a huge challenge. My homeroom teacher, Tee, really took the time to explain things to me and to help me and all of my teachers did their very best to explain things when I didn't know them. Even with all their help though, every time a new topic was introduced, I would burst into tears and I would feel like I couldn't do it...that it was all too much. Tee was so wonderful though and whenever I would cry, Tee would patiently help me and remind me that I could do it! When I first got the news that the rec program was starting, I was thrilled because I got to see my friends and everyone I love. I also realized that the most important people in my life have stuck by me throughout the whole year and were always there for me- my friends from class, they are like a family and we did everything we could to support each other and to get through this together. I love them and I thank them all!"



Meet Derek

Middle Years, 9th grade

"At the beginning of the year 2020 I found out that Futuro Verde had chosen me to compete for a full scholarship because I was playing on a community basketball team with Professor Ramirez, the Futuro Verde's Athletic Director, and he recommended me to the scholarship committee. When I was accepted and we started classes, I felt a bit strange because I went from a school where only Spanish was spoken to a school where many languages were spoken, but as time went by, I started to understand more and I felt very comfortable. It was very peaceful at Futuro Verde. The people from outside Futuro Verde told me that I would not be able to succeed there, but when I started classes I found that everyone helped me a lot and that I was able to achieve everything. When the pandemic came, things got complicated because now everything was online and I had never used a computer. My brother was at home and helped me a little bit. Even so, when I was at home, I started to get distracted and lazy because I would see all of the unfinished assignments and get discouraged. But the teachers did not leave me behind and encouraged me. I got into a very bad routine for a long time, but when they managed to open the campus for the recreational program, I started attending again and managed to recover and catch up. At that time I also had to start working in a paint shop because my mom needed my financial help. Working and doing the schoolwork proved to be impossible, so I quit the job. The worst part of the year was at the beginning of the pandemic because I didn't know anything about computers and I was overwhelmed. The best thing was going to school every day, seeing my friend Joaquin and the teachers, and not feeling so stressed anymore. I am very grateful to the Futuro Verde donors because they really help us to have a better future and to be better people. Thank you from the bottom of my heart!"



Meet Francinie and Francheska

IB Generation 2021

What were your hopes for the 2020 school year before it began?

Francheska- "Looking towards the beginning of IB, I was very nervous, but when I started IB I realized that it is difficult but not impossible. I understood that I should not let fear guide me, but instead believe that I could do it."

Francinie- "I had hoped that 2020 would make me more social, but the pandemic changed everything. Learning online is difficult for everyone - for students and teachers."

Francheska- "That's true, because it's not the same to be in a Zoom as it is to be in the Classroom, and everything is harder. You feel like there is always more work to be done. But it has also taught us not to give up, that you can do anything if you believe in yourself. It has taught us to be stronger."

Francinie- "Spending more time on homework has made me realize that I can do it all - I am smart, I am capable and I have realized that, by taking the time, I can accomplish all my tasks and also spend time with my family."

What has been your experience during the pandemic?

Francheska- “Before the pandemic, everything was easier, but you have to know how to deal with things, and that's what teachers are for. It was a drastic change, but we were able to get through it even though it wasn't easy.”

What was the worst part of the year for you?

Francheska- “The worst thing about this year has been getting the IAs that have to be turned in next year, because everything takes time and research, and we have to get organized. Not having the teacher there makes the work take even longer.”

Francinie- “The worst moment was the day they sent us home and we ended up not coming back. We all thought it was temporary and it has been going on all year. I never imagined that my first IB year would be what it has been this year - alone, online, with no easy and quick feedback...it's super hard.”

What have you learned, or what has been the best moment for you this year?

Francheska- “We are worried about when we will finally go back to normal classes. But the best moment of the year is now, because the last day of this school year is coming and I realize that I made it - my first IB year with all its challenges! I made it and I know that I can make it next year too. I am very grateful to the teachers, who have always encouraged us and told us that we can do it and that everything will be ok. They give me the confidence to keep going.”

Francinie- “At the beginning of the year I wanted to do everything perfectly and I never did anything social. But I have come to understand that learning should be enjoyable and that it is a beautiful and balanced process with time for my friends and family as well”.

Parent Profiles

Meet some of our families



Daniel Castro Sánchez and Ericka Rodríguez Calderón

Parents of Alana, pre-kinder

What were your motivations and expectations when you enrolled Alana at Futuro Verde?

We made the decision to enroll Alana at Futuro Verde based on the values of the school because we had heard great things about Futuro Verde. For us, the values of respect, tolerance, and the equality of people despite their differences are very important. We noticed big changes in her because of the kind of attention she was getting. Futuro Verde surpassed our expectations and progress and everything she has learned has made us very happy. Also, the connection between different age groups is very valuable - Futuro Verde is really a community.

This year has been challenging. What was your experience with your daughter like?

We were very worried about the pandemic because of Alana's learning, but it pushed us and taught us a lot. We were given tools from the classroom and so Alana learned to read and in the end she loved being with us and continuing to learn. Before the pandemic, Alana had been missing her Mom, but now that she was home, she missed her friends. There are so many children who could not continue studying and we are so grateful that our daughter was able to continue learning despite the circumstances.

This pandemic has made me value my role as a father. These moments for children are very difficult and our role is to set the tone. The situation that we are experiencing is unprecedented. The role of the family and the school has always been important and it is important to instill joy and responsibility even when circumstances do not facilitate it.

Would you like to share anything else?

A good education is worthwhile. We are very grateful to all the staff and all the work they have done and how they have handled the pandemic situation. Although things have changed a lot, the staff takes their role with the student community seriously and it's beautiful and important, something we haven't seen in a school before. We are very grateful that Alana can come to school in the conditions that they make possible.

Something that makes a big difference at Futuro Verde is that everyone involved - the teachers, the parents, everyone - does things with love and not just because they have to. You can see that the teachers talk to the students with love, with children of all ages, and the support is wonderful. Hopefully Futuro Verde will be able to include many more children in their beautiful environment and educational venture.



Denia Salas Segura

Mother, Edgardo, 5th grade

What were your motivations and expectations when you enrolled Edgardo at Futuro Verde?

Edgardo started in the first grade after attending preschool with Sonya (the Vice President of the Board of Directors of Futuro Verde and the Director of the Only Love preschool in Mal Pais). I was very excited when he moved to Futuro Verde because they always said great things about the school, the education and the teachers, and now I see that it was all true because Edgardo has very good English after five years at the institution and speaks like a native. Also, Edgardo always learns so much at Futuro Verde and tells me about different countries and other things he has learned. If we go somewhere he tells me about the hills and everything we see. I see that he knows a lot and has learned a lot.

How did Edgardo react to the pandemic and the restrictions?

When the pandemic hit, it was very frustrating because I don't understand English and I don't know a lot about technology. It was difficult for me, but at the same time, it was an important adjustment. We had to buy a tablet for Edgardo and work on what we didn't know how to do yet so that he wouldn't fall behind. The support from Futuro Verde has been very good for Edgardo throughout the pandemic. When the CAI and recreational programs started, Edgardo was very happy because he really wanted to get out of the house and be with his friends.

Since you have had such a positive experience at Futuro Verde, what have you appreciated the most?

Edgardo has learned so much at school, they taught him to accept change and to be loving and interact with others. If he meets tourists, he talks to them and is interested in getting to know them.

I love this school- there is no other school for me. Futuro Verde has been the best thing for me. Edgardo always tells me that when he graduates he wants to go on an exchange and travel and study and someday be president. He loves the field trips and he looks forward to them and having those experiences. And in the end, that is what FV is to me and my son - a great opportunity for experiences and dreams and the possibility of a better future. Thank you Futuro Verde!



Marla Streb

Mother, Kiano and Nicoya, 5th and 8th grades

When did you join Futuro Verde and why did you choose the school initially?

We bought our house in Montezuma in 2006 and Nico was in FV when it first began and the school was run in a small house. We then moved back to the US and when we came back fulltime in 2019 it was an easy decision to decide to enroll the girls in the school. It is an international community and I really love that and it was always going to be easier for my kids to come to a bilingual school. I was also really interested in the IB program and I wanted the girls long-term to have the preparation to do with their lives whatever they wanted. We love how diverse the school community is and the different perspectives from the Tico families, the Europeans and we also love the environmental and

athletic focus. It is just the right amount of a relaxed, yet rigorous at the same time, environment for our family. We are car free for environmental reasons and the school is a great fit for our family within that way of thinking and being. The programming at FV before COVID was really amazing. For such a small little country and a small peninsula like ours, there is so much to offer young people at FV. It is unusual to have theatre and all the opportunities that you have at FV under normal conditions. Taking the girls out of the US and coming here, their transition was eased and even when we were part-time before making the move permanently, we could come into the school for short periods of time and they would accommodate the kids for short-term enrollment too. Another thing I appreciate is the transparency at the school- it is quite admirable! Our girls have attended Waldorf and Montessori schools in the US and at FV I am so impressed to be able to understand how the school is structured and run. Additionally, I have had the opportunity to work as a substitute teacher at the school and I have loved that.

When the pandemic hit Costa Rica, how was the impact on your family?

Initially the kids switched to online learning and that was a challenge for our family because I had purposefully kept screens away from my kids their whole lives. The teachers were flexible and helpful with us when it was hard to get online. When we didn't have the Internet at home, the school let us come in and work in the school computer lab and with the school Internet. I think the school response was appropriate and the value of the school learning experience continued and we knew we would stick with the school and that the administration would do everything they could to bring students back on campus. The school also supported our family financially with temporary COVID-19 relief tuition and that was a game changer for us and allowed us to weather the storm without feeling like we needed to pull the kids out. When the school was able to get the programming for rec going, the kids have benefited so much and we are so grateful and try not to brag to others who are in a far worse situation with their kids. It is such an advantage to be at FV and to have the new space and the infrastructure specific to COVID and the school was ready to have students come back and to have the space ready for them. Because we were coming in to use the Internet we could see how hard everyone was working and how dedicated they were.

Any final thoughts?

If you look at FV's evolution from the beginning until now, just think about where the school will be in another 10 years. It is a good investment for your children and in the peninsula and that is a good thing for the community as a whole. I expect the school to continue to grow and to improve. We are very happy we are here and I can't imagine my kids anywhere else!

Futuro Verde in 2020, pre-COVID

Capital Campaign Investments

The beginning of the 2020 school year was an exciting time for Futuro Verde. Our enrollment was strong, having peaked at 218 students from preschool through 12th grade. We were excited about expansion of our programming and the inclusion of new staff to strengthen existing programming and we were most excited to have successfully completed important infrastructure projects!

A new wing for the upper elementary grades

After years in temporary structures, 2020 gave us a start with three new classrooms for 4th, 5th and 6th grades. The classroom design followed our successful experience with our middle school classroom built in 2019 and allowed for ample entrance of light and airflow with half walls and no doors. Teachers, students and parents were delighted to see the size of the classrooms and to have a dedicated outdoor corridor for this new wing.

A new set of bathrooms and hand-washing station for the elementary grades

In addition to the three new classrooms, much needed additional bathrooms and hand-washing stations were also added prior to the start of the school year. Students were pleased to have easy access to this brand new bathroom suite and the location allowed for less interruption from little ones using the middle school corridor to access the restrooms.

Schoolwide, eco wastewater treatment plant installed

For years now we have known that investment in an eco-friendly waste management system was necessary and the start of 2020 saw all of our bathrooms and grey water connected to this extensive system which produces waste water clean enough to drink! We won't be taking that final step at this time, but we are excited to connect the waste water in the future back up to our school gardens to be used for watering during the dry season!

Administrative building expansion: new libraries, multimedia center, conference/testing room, psychologist office and additional office space

During the seven years our school library has officially existed, it has outgrown three different homes, before now making a more permanent move to our newly built library spaces which offer one library space for preschool and primary grades and a separate space for middle and high school, along with a dedicated computer lab. Our fantastic librarian, Paola, has been working tirelessly, with the help of volunteer students and parents, in order to catalog all our library titles and turn our new library spaces into the dream libraries we have always hoped for!

The administrative building remodel has also added to our campus a conference/testing room to be used for board meetings and external IB and MEP testing along with two additional bathrooms and six additional office spaces!



Futuro Verde COVID Crisis Response

Mission driven, no matter the challenge

Our Mission

We are a bilingual, international school where students are encouraged to be reflective learners who – through processes of inquiry and critical thinking – develop the knowledge needed to address global issues related to social justice, intercultural relations, and the environment.



A school staying true to its mission is relatively simple under typical circumstances but the COVID-19 pandemic challenges one's ability to stay true to our founding principles as a school community. Futuro Verde's mission seeks to "...[encourage students to be] reflective learners who - through processes of inquiry and critical thinking - develop the knowledge needed to address global issues..." and so we started our pandemic, crisis response early and with a dedicated process of modeling this exact behavior from January through March as we followed the spread of the virus, connected with our international school colleagues around the world and began to plan for the inevitable- the arrival of COVID-19 to Costa Rica and the eventual school closures that would follow. Using what we observed, in deep conversation and with scenario building, we began to seriously prepare for the response we would have as a school community.

The morning of March 16th, our leadership team gathered with board president Enrico Reolon to make a pre-emptive decision to temporarily close the school in the hopes of keeping our students, teachers and families safe from illness. We had nearly completed drafting the message to teachers and families that same afternoon when the Costa Rican government announced a national emergency and the shut down of most of the country to begin the very next day. We quickly redrafted the message to reflect the new mandate, sent it to families and one hour prior to the end of what everyone had believed was a normal school day, we moved quickly from classroom to classroom and told teachers to prepare for a temporary closure. "You might want to think about what school supplies you would like students to have at home and send those with them today," I told them. We had no way of imagining that our temporary school closure would end up lasting over eight months and the rest of the 2020 school year.

The following day, all staff came back on campus. We started the morning with a Crisis Response Protocol that gave space for processing the events and the big emotions that accompanied them. Anger, fear, confusion, disappointment and sadness were commonly expressed by our staff and their thoughts quickly turned to our students and families and just how we might best support them and support one another. The rest of the afternoon was spent on technology training and planning for a shift to full online and distance learning. It was amazing to see our teacher's strength, their determination, and to know that we would be able to weather this together!

The next months were full of ups and downs as we all adapted to this new, unwanted reality- a time of great global volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity in the world. Reflecting on our path, we were far from perfect but I am proud to say that we gave it our all, we held strong to our mission as a school and we did everything we could to support one another throughout. Simultaneously, our board of directors and leadership team worked tirelessly to ensure the campus would be ready for a return under COVID conditions- handwashing stations were installed, group tables were converted to individual desks, personal protection equipment was acquired for all and the entire staff was trained on the new safety protocols. Additional support came in many familiar, and some very unexpected, ways.



Financial Strain and Community-Led Solutions

2020 was also a year of financial challenges. Futuro Verde families were economically hard hit, and as a responsible community school we took on the challenge of offering a sensible monthly discount option for those families that were severely affected. There were 47 students who received temporary discounts during most of this year, totaling around 40,000,000 colones.

This year was possible thanks to the constant efforts of the administration in reducing expenses, the board of directors in the search for additional donation income, the parents who decided to continue paying full monthly tuition when possible and who, despite economic difficulties, came to us for help by means of temporary discounts while still keeping their children in Futuro Verde. Above all, thanks to the exhausting work of our teachers who, despite accepting a salary reduction beginning in the first months of the year and losing some of their colleagues who had to be laid off due to budget cuts, continued to offer dual-quality teaching (classroom and online) to all our students.

The donations we received helped cover the necessary costs of materials and improvements to the facilities in order to run the recreational and CAI programs. The Board of Directors and some parents continue to help bring in new donations that will now be used to reduce 2021 monthly tuition fees as much as possible. We look forward to a different 2021 full of new challenges and the search for financial, emotional and social stability for all the families that make up our beloved institution.

Permits and Protocols

After months of only having the option of online and distance learning, our students have benefitted tremendously this year from the steadfast efforts of our board and leadership team who worked tirelessly to process multiple additional permits to support our school community during this difficult time.

Recreational Programming

In August our broader governing association, Asociación Escuela Futuro Verde, acquired an additional operating permit for **Centro Recreativo Futuro Verde** and we began to offer complimentary and optional recreational programming to all of our students on campus.



CAI

Comprehensive Learning Centers, or CAIs, for their abbreviations in Spanish, aim to enable young people under the age of twelve to have the care and protection of a loving childcare center along with the services that ensure them higher levels of autonomy, participation, protection and care. Futuro verde was fortunate to acquire CAI permitting first for our 3 to 6 year olds and then later for our 7 to 12 year olds and in doing so we began to offer full day childcare and learning opportunities for our preschool and elementary aged children as an optional compliment to online and distance learning. CAI FV has been a real gift to the FV community!

IB in person exams

As external exams drew near, Futuro Verde moved to the forefront of pedagogical approaches in Costa Rica when we advocated for our 12th grade, International Baccalaureate (IB) students to come on-campus, following all health protocols, in order to take their high school graduation, IB exams. In the end, Futuro Verde was one of only three Costa Rican schools to step forward to take this brave step. Although IB offered a non-exam route, our students' results were best aided by them doing exams and we are now anxiously awaiting their results in early January.



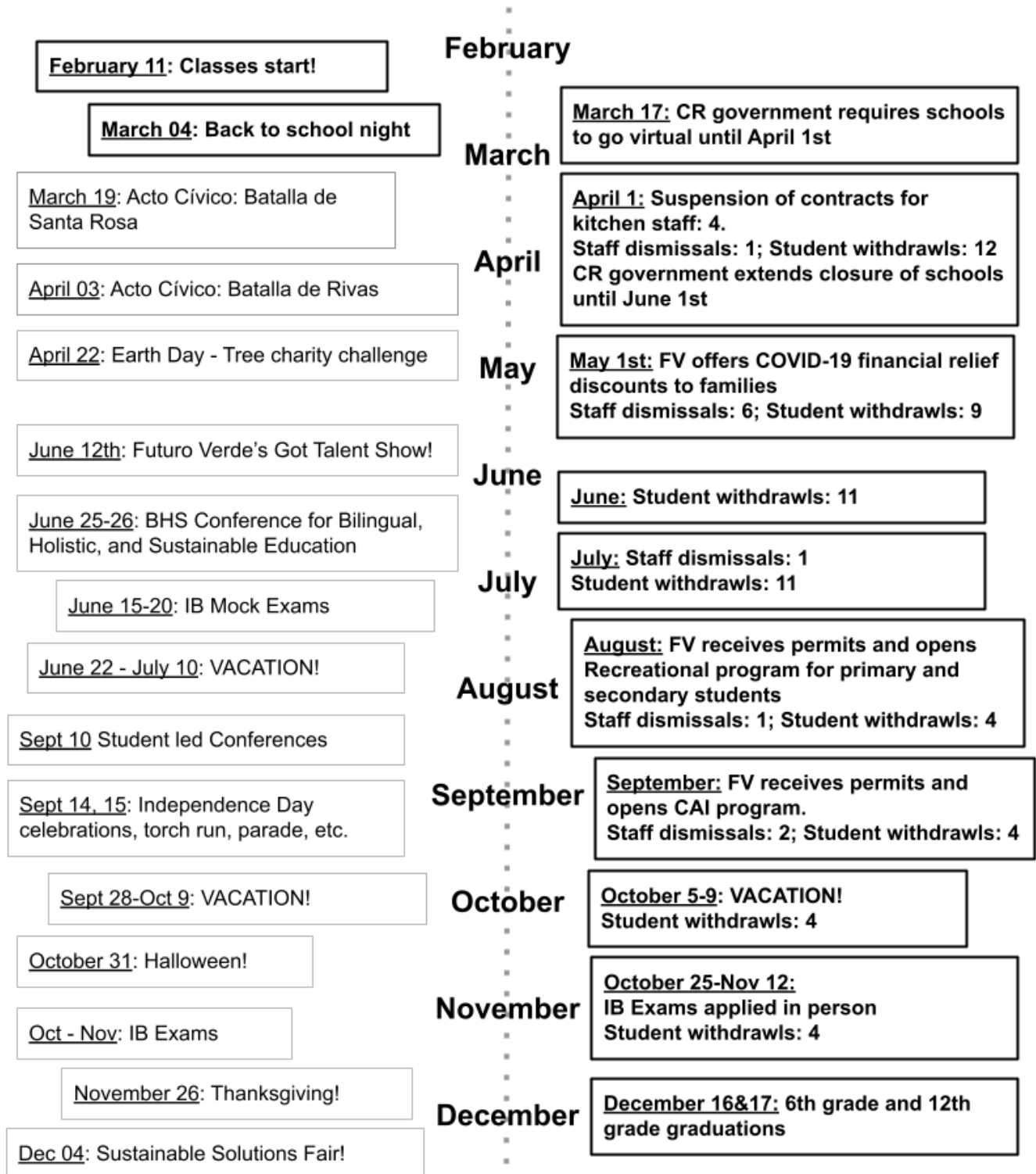
During a time of global school closure, isolation of students from their peers and incredible learning loss and psychological strain, we are proud of the efforts we achieved as a school community. We developed and maintained a high-quality online and distance learning program, we offered meaningful, safe and fun on campus programming for all ages and we helped our 12th grade IB students have the very best possible chance of impressive IB diploma results!

Pandemic Timeline: 2020

2020

Plan

Reality



Futuro Verde in a nutshell

At a Glance

2020 Enrollment **216**
**before Covid-19*

Student Teacher Ratio: **7 to 1**

Financial Aid
Percentage of students who
receive some form of financial aid **29%**



Students

First to second generation familial
countries of origin: **25**

Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China,
Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, England,
France, Germany, Guatemala, Italy, Israel,
Mexico, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Peru, Puerto
Rico, Russia, Spain, Switzerland, USA

Languages spoken in the home: **11**

French, Spanish, English, Flemish, Hebrew,
Italian, Mandarin, Swiss German, Portuguese,
Dutch, German.

Staff

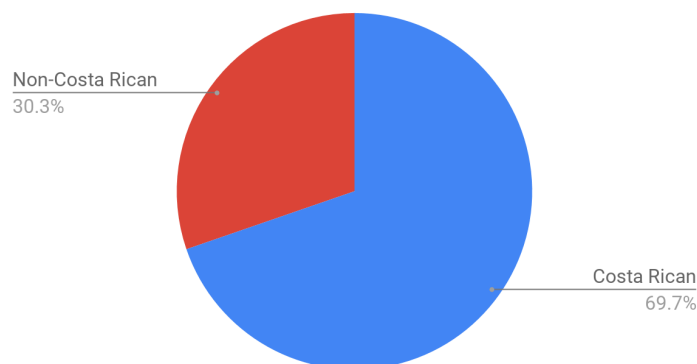
Total number of teaching and
administrative staff: **40**

Countries of origin: **14**

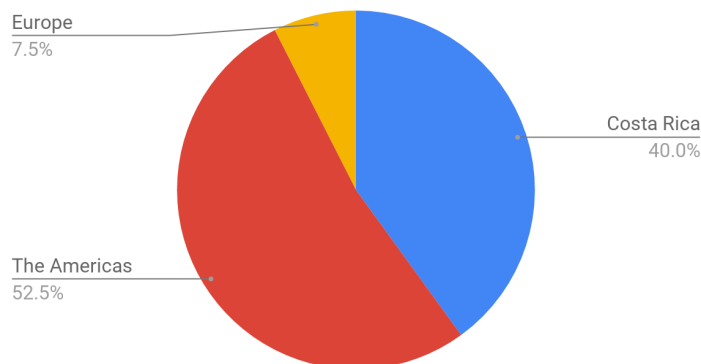
Costa Rica, Colombia, US, Canada, Puerto Rico,
Mexico, El Salvador, Scotland, Argentina,
Uruguay, Honduras, Nicaragua, Spain and
England

Percentage of teaching staff holding
either a Master's or Doctoral Degree **38%**

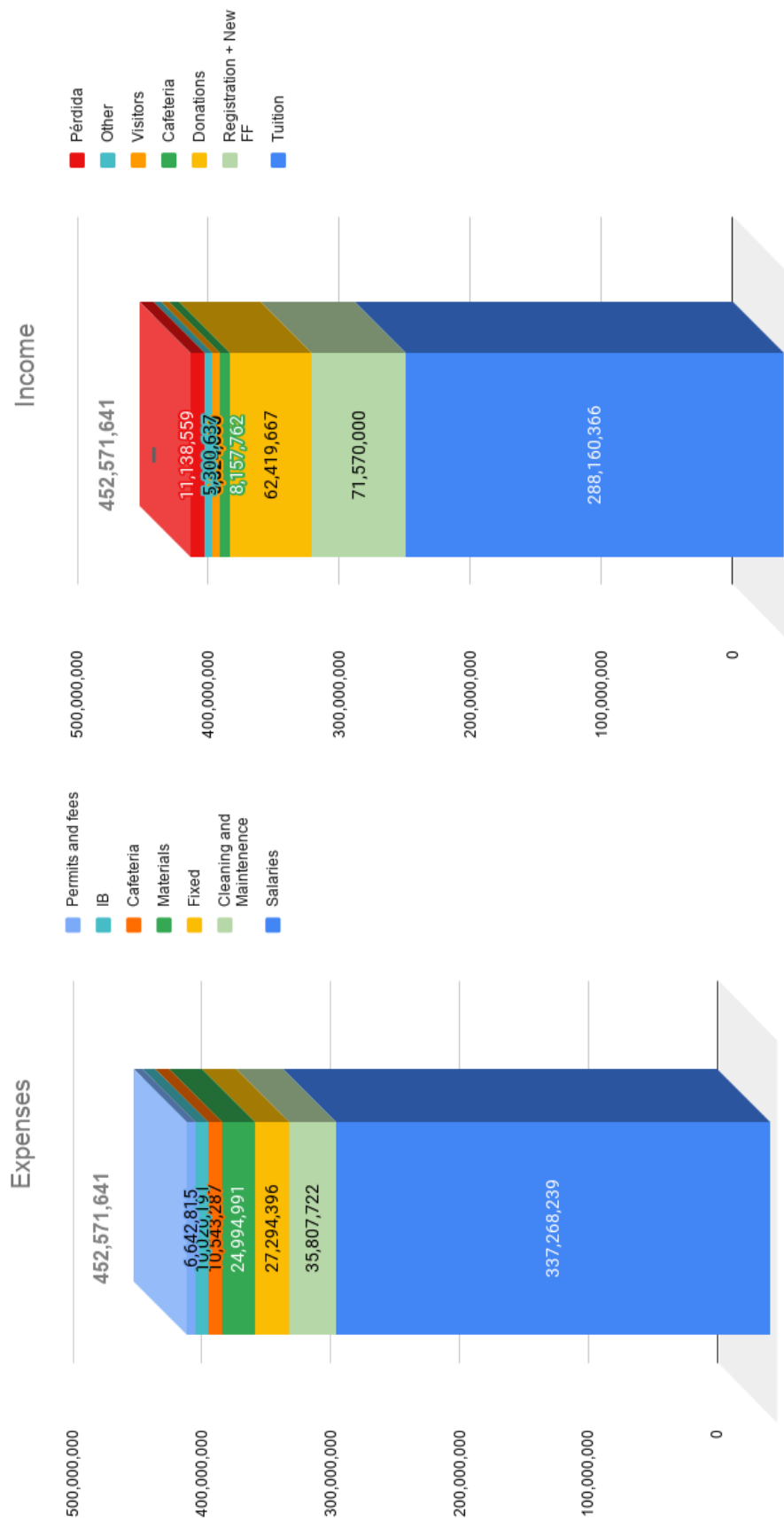
Student country of origin



Staff Country of Origin



Financials



Fundraising

Fundraising Efforts in 2020

Chuffed campaign

(to support the COVID-19 discount offered to families)

Amount raised: \$28,625

Student Sponsorship

(14 sponsored students benefited)

Amount raised: \$50,000

Direct Donations

(to support operational budget made via website or direct bank deposits)

Amount raised: \$75,357

TUI Grant

(to assist with the implementation of online and hybrid learning)

Amount raised: \$5,800

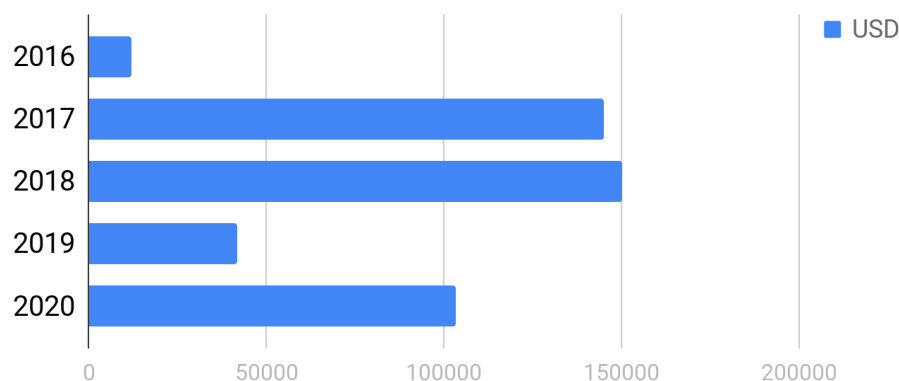
chuffed



Funds from donations were used in the following ways:

1. Economic support in the form of discounts to families suffering from economic repercussions due to COvid-19. **Total tuition discounts: \$54,000**
2. Provide adequate infrastructure for the return in hybrid modality thanks to the CAI and Recreation Center permits and that complied with the protocols of the Ministry of Health:
 - a. Construction of hand washing station at the school entrance as the first step of the protocol.
 - b. Purchase of digital thermometers, soap dispensers, towels, alcohol bottles, equipment for cleaning personnel, masks and shields for teachers, administrative and maintenance personnel.
 - c. Improvement of classroom infrastructure.
 - d. Modifications to the classroom tables: the tables were divided to allow for individual tables per student and placed 1.8m apart.
 - e. Teachers and staff endured an initial period of salary reductions. Donations enabled teachers to maintain their salaries and kept them from being drastically cut. As a result, we were able to keep our amazing teachers who worked so hard during this challenging 2020 school year.

Donations At-A-Glance



Scholarship Fund Highlights:

John Dolan Memorial Scholarship Fund Launch Scholarship



In a year full of challenges, we are deeply grateful to all those who contributed through donations to the John Dolan Scholarship Fund so that Futuro Verde could continue to offer quality education to all families who are part of the John Dolan Scholarship Fund.

Although this year has brought with it many lessons, challenges and reflections, we are very grateful to the families who overcame those barriers and continued their commitment to quality education for their children despite the distance, technology and difficulties. None of this would have been possible without the help of the donors to the John Dolan Scholarship Fund. As part of our commitment to the community and to the children of our school, we have confirmed the renewal of this scholarship for the 2021 school year for all the families who had scholarships during the 2020 school year.

"Education is freedom" - Paulo Freire

Ways to Give:

Patreon Account

 [Become a patron](#)

Futuro Verde is excited to announce that you can become a patron of Futuro Verde through our Patreon Creator Account. Learn about our school and see the latest news, view locked content! Donations via Patreon are tax deductible in the USA.

Futuro Verde Website

Our [school website](#) is a safe and convenient way to donate using **PayPal** or **credit card** online! We recommend this option if the **donation is less than \$1000.**

529 Savings Plan

Futuro Verde's fiscal sponsor can receive tuition payments from 529s for students through Green Wave Enterprises.

Please contact Futuro Verde for specifics on how to contribute to Futuro Verde using a **529 Savings Plan**.

Wire transfer

For donations over \$1000, we recommend a **wire transfer** or **bank cheque**.

Please refer to our [Donation Guide](#) for more information and instructions.

Perspectives from a Volunteer Fundraiser

Heather Gerould



The challenges Futuro Verde and its families faced over this school year cannot be understated. Amid the COVID pandemic that swept through Costa Rica, our small town felt the economic crisis firsthand, with many families facing financial challenges, forcing the school to make dramatic adjustments. Despite these cuts, the staff remained enthusiastic and eager to make whatever adjustments necessary to continue to educate Futuro Verde's students. This speaks volumes about the foundational staff of Futuro Verde. That is not to say the transition did not have its challenges, it did of course, but each and every challenge was met with enthusiasm, and a student-first perspective.

Over the past several months, I have been working with Futuro Verde on their grant-writing initiatives, in an effort to obtain more funding and to ease the burden as we move forward. While I am more of an academic writer, I volunteered to research and write grants to see if we could get additional funding for the school. It has been (and will continue to be) quite a humbling experience. We have received many "while your school sounds great and we recognize all that you do" letters. The questions that we continued to ask ourselves were, how can you connect to funders and relay all of the dynamic work this little school, tucked away on the Nicoya Peninsula, can do? How do you convey this to others? It has been so challenging, but also so rewarding, to see the administration and families coming together in this effort.

I am very happy and proud of all the hard work that has been done over the past few months and am happy to announce that we have received a small grant of \$6500. This money will go toward supporting our current initiatives aimed to best support our students in the midst of the government-imposed school closure. This includes support for at home, online and distance learning as well as support for funding of our on campus activities, including college counseling, recreational activities, child care support and parent education and counseling.

We give thanks to the entire Futuro Verde community for their belief, flexibility and ongoing support from the beginning of the pandemic to date. Without question, more challenges lie ahead, but if the past is any indication, I know we will meet those challenges with equal enthusiasm, grit and determination.

Cheers to a new year with new opportunities and new adventures in education ahead!