



## Early Learning: Sustainable Growth and Expansion

by Dave Mayer

Headlines about early learning programs are everywhere. Cost, availability, and staff retention are among the key challenges facing the childcare and early learning industry in Washington state and across the country.

Our goal is to play a significant role in addressing these challenges with the support of individuals who believe deeply in the importance of early childhood Catholic education. Fulcrum's Early Childhood Education Endowment and its donors are the driving force behind the growth and development of these critical programs.

Our Catholic schools currently serve more than 2,000 early learning students across 56 programs. Of these, 46 are state-licensed and offer full-day programming. An additional three programs are in the licensing process, and seven provide half-day programming. Across our schools, 121 classrooms are dedicated to early learning, and we have added between five and eight classrooms each year for the past four years.

We address program availability in several key ways. First, we expand age groups room by room within existing programs. For example, when a school serves four- and five-year-old students in a PreK program, we work collaboratively to identify space to add a three-year-old classroom. This approach has been successful, with multiple schools expanding to include two-year-old and infant programs. Adding toddler and infant programs is especially critical, as these age groups represent the greatest need statewide.

Second, leaders and dedicated volunteers identify underutilized spaces in school buildings, parish facilities, and off-site locations to expand existing programs or create new ones. Recent examples include converting a church hall, a convent, and former parish offices into early learning spaces. The Partners in the Gospel initiative has provided a unique opportunity to engage parishes in meaningful conversations about what is possible for their campuses.

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*Dave Mayer serves as the Director of Early Childhood Education in the Office for Catholic Schools.*

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Professional development is a key strategy for retaining our outstanding early learning staff. We offer monthly trainings focused on inclusion, behavior support, child development, curriculum, leadership, and more. Early learning staff members may apply for grants to pursue early learning certificates and degrees at local colleges and universities. Twice a year, we bring staff together in person for training sessions and conversations on critical early learning topics. In addition, we create mentorship opportunities for early learning leaders and host monthly regional virtual meetings where staff can share ideas and learn from one another.

With Fulcrum's generous support, our leaders do outstanding work ensuring that Catholic education is accessible to all families who seek it. Our early learning programs reflect this commitment by



### Holy Family in Auburn: New Life for Convent

In the 1960s, Holy Family in Auburn constructed a convent to serve the parish community. Over the decades, the building has housed multiple ministries, but was no longer used at full capacity. The parish and school leadership teams engaged in strategic conversations about enrollment growth, resulting in a plan to renovate the convent into a new Infant-PreK Early Learning Center while preserving the convent's chapel. Opening in September 2026, the new center will serve more than 60 children and provide a strong foundation for enrollment in the K-8 school community.



### St. Elizabeth Ann Seton: Partners in the Gospel in Action

Partners in the Gospel is a renewal effort designed to support vibrant, sustainable, mission-focused parish communities. When St. Pius X in Mountlake Terrace and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Bothell were joined as a parish family, school leadership at St. Pius X worked with the pastor to develop a plan to serve more families in their growing community. Underutilized spaces at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton will be renovated to enhance early learning offerings for the parish family. These additional classrooms are scheduled to open in September 2026.



leveraging state funding to increase affordability. Over the past two years, our licensed programs have utilized \$1.5 million in state subsidies to support families who need additional assistance to participate in our programs.

The Office for Catholic Schools has been actively involved in state advocacy supporting the early learning industry by co-chairing the Washington State Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) Provider Supports group and collaborating with other leaders through the Washington Federation of Independent Schools.

By addressing these challenges, the early learning programs of the Archdiocese of Seattle are positioning themselves as a state leader and a model for sustainable growth.



### St. Joseph Early Learning Center: Church Hall Renovation

In the fall of 2022, a group of visionary and innovative staff and volunteers came together to reimagine the St. Patrick Parish Hall as an Early Learning Center after St. Patrick and St. Joseph Parishes in Seattle merged. Their creativity, persistence, and dedication resulted in a major renovation project that opened as an Infant-PreK Early Learning Center in September 2025. The center now serves more than 40 families and offers a warm, engaging home away from home where children can explore, play, and thrive.



## The Heart Behind the Work

After 15 remarkable years at the Fulcrum Foundation, we celebrate Cathy Wise with deep gratitude for the creativity, care, and heart she brought to every project and every person she encountered. As our longtime Graphic Design Manager, Cathy not only shaped Fulcrum's visual identity, but also helped tell the story of our mission, bringing to life the impact of Catholic education across Western Washington with beauty and clarity. Her steady presence, thoughtful collaboration, and quiet excellence have left a lasting imprint on Fulcrum and the many communities we serve.

Cathy, thank you for your incredible gifts, your dedication, and the joy you brought to our team. We wish you every happiness in your retirement.



## In Memoriam

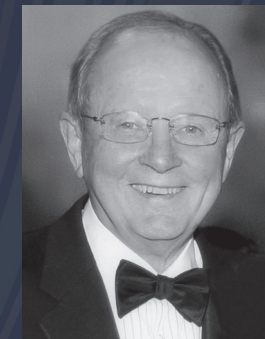
At the Fulcrum Foundation, our mission is carried forward not only through programs and partnerships, but through the lives of those who believe in it deeply enough to invest in its future. Recently, we said goodbye to six extraordinary donors and friends whose generosity and vision helped shape the course of Catholic education across Western Washington.

Each of these individuals shared a common belief: that every child deserves access to an excellent, values-centered education. Their philanthropy was never about recognition; it was about impact. Through their generosity, thousands of students gained opportunities they might not otherwise have had. Classrooms were strengthened, schools were sustained, and communities were uplifted.

May they rest in peace, and may their legacy continue to light the path forward.



Timmie Hollomon  
1937-2025



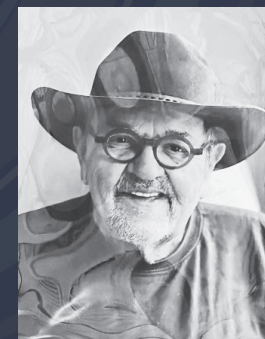
David Hovind  
1940-2025



Chuck Pigott  
1929-2026



Yvonne Pigott  
1930-2026



Michael Tucci, Sr.  
1940-2026



Ann Wyckoff  
1927-2026

## Fulcrum Futures Kicks-Off this Fall!

We invite all young professionals to our kick-off Happy Hour this coming October!

*Fulcrum Futures* is a collective of young professionals dedicated to supporting the mission of the Fulcrum Foundation and Catholic schools across Western Washington. Members offer their time, talent, and treasure to create connections and meaningful opportunities for Catholic school students and alumni.



**OCTOBER 8**

For more information on Fulcrum Futures, please email [Futures@fulcrumfoundation.org](mailto:Futures@fulcrumfoundation.org).



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## Save These Dates!



**OCTOBER 26 & 27**



**NOVEMBER 29**



**JANUARY 29**