



Teacher Keenya Smallwood gives one-on-one attention to 5-year-old Harris Walker at the school, where students range in age from 3 to 12.

Sanctu

Montessori pupils, St. Mary's alumni celebrate the hallowed halls' long, storied history

Walk past the meticulously maintained cluster of historic red brick buildings and serene gardens of St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church at Sixth and Pine streets in Wilmington and up the steps of the three-story red brick schoolhouse on the grounds - The Elementary Workshop Montessori School - and press the buzzer.

A teacher opens the door and welcomes you into a long, wide hallway flanked by rooms on either side and a staircase at the far end. You feel lifted into a high, clear space; well-ordered, immaculately clean, freshly painted. You might even smell cookies baking. Children are engrossed in their work, soft-spoken, respectful. They wear house slippers - less noise on the creaky old floors, less dirt, and comfortable for learning about something while sitting on the floor.

On Nov. 2, St. Mary's celebrated its 145th anniversary. The children of the Montessori School, housed in the former St. Mary's schoolhouse, helped by making birthday cards and cookies. On Nov. 3, St. Mary's School alumni, now in their 70s, showed photos and told stories of what school was like in the 1930s and '40s when it was part of St. Mary's and they were taught by nuns.

"In those days," said alumnus Ed Manlove, 70, of New Castle, "you might have to stay in from recess and be given tasks such as writing on the blackboard 500 times 'I must be silent.'"

"[My classmates and I] were together from first grade in 1939 to eighth in 1947," said Manlove, who grew up at Ninth and Pine.

"My grandson," said Manlove, "Finnegan Henry O'Brien, a preschooler, is the sixth generation of my family to trod St. Mary's grounds, starting with my great-grandmother, Marguerite Hennighan, who attended St. Mary's Church.

"My grandmother, Mary Elizabeth McNulty, taught music and grammar there when it was a public school. My father, aunts and uncles attended school there."



Nine-year-old Eric Jude Miller finds a com

NEXT WEEK

Read the story of the Rev. James Trainor, the man who devoted his life to resurrecting St. Mary's Church from the ashes and restoring a disintegrating parish. Next week, in Crossroads.

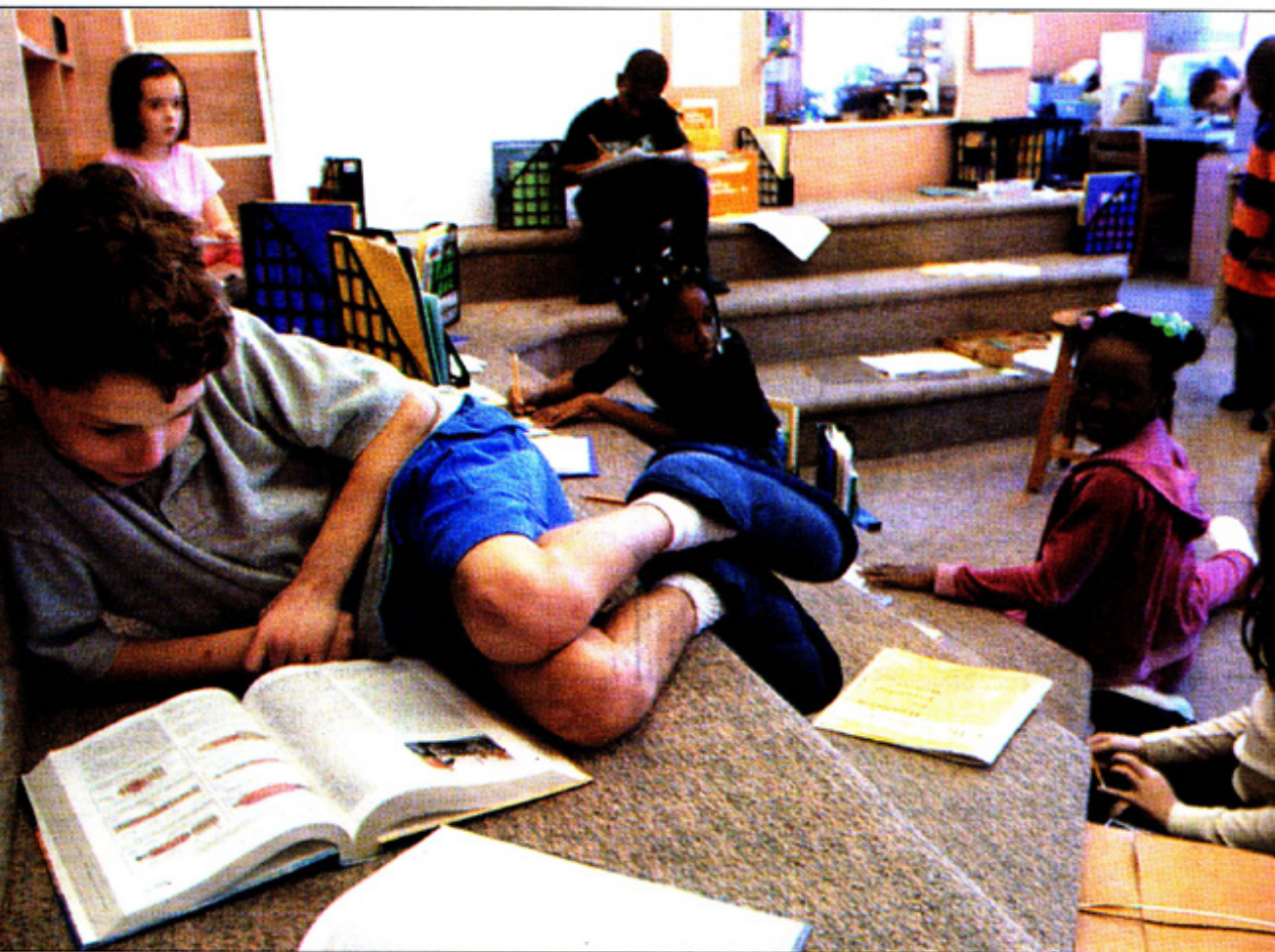
Several Elementary Workshop alumni have students in school there now. Shanda Hall, of Wilmington, who attended EWMS from 1975-79, has a child enrolled in the school.

"EWMS gave me a leg up," she said. "The education taught me to be open-minded and tolerant. The teaching is geared toward how we were made to learn. It taught me to prioritize and decide what to do. It



Ed Manlove, 70, talks to the children about his years as a pupil at St. Mary's, from 1939 to 1947. His grandson is the sixth generation of the family to attend St. Mary's.

Actuary of learning



Eric Jude Miller finds a comfortable perch for reading at the Elementary Workshop Montessori School on the grounds of St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church.

WEEK

story of the Rev. Trainor, the man who dedicated to resurrecting St. Mary's from the ashes and reintegrating parish. Crossroads.

Elementary Workshop students in schoolhouse at St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church. Photo by Bob Herbert.

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Article by Carol Child, special to The News Journal.
News Journal photographs by Bob Herbert.

motivated me to be a lifelong learner."

"If you ask any teacher here," said EWMS Director McCrae Harrison, "their philosophy would be that the students become lifelong learners."

Teachers must be trained in the Montessori method. Everything in the classroom is carefully chosen and arranged to sensually stimulate the child.

Children range in age from 3 to 12. The 3- to 6-year-olds start with learning order and practical life skills. All the kids learn computer skills; they have built Web sites and created I-movies. Their artwork has been publicly exhib-

ited. They walk to the Wilmington Public Library, to the YWCA for swim class and to the Baby Grand for dance, theater and music lessons, and they go on field trips.

Harrison attributes the children's sense of order and discipline to being treated with respect and to parental involvement.

"We're getting children who are farther along," said Harrison. "Parents have researched their options. So, they're already involved with their children and their education."

Both the church and school are on the National Register of Historic Places. The school, built in 1886, served as St. Mary's Catholic

School, and for a time was a public school. Now, EWMS leases the schoolhouse from St. Mary's for \$1 a year with the understanding it cares for the building. Parents and volunteers do all the work.

St. Mary's Church was consecrated in 1858 by St. John Neumann, Bishop of Philadelphia. By the early 1970s, the church had fallen into disrepair. Around 1975, the Rev. James Trainor became pastor of St. Mary's.

"Father Trainor resurrected the church," said Manlove. "He brought it back from the ashes."

Sadly, Trainor, who will turn 69 on Wednesday, underwent triple bypass heart surgery on June 6. Since a few days after the surgery he has remained comatose, cared for at the Little Sisters of the Poor Nursing Home.

FY
Elementary Montessori

LOCATION: 5025 Wilmington
CONTACT: McCrae Harrison, director, 656-1498
www.elementarywms.org

ACCREDITATION: Private, independent organization, accredited by the American Montessori Society, the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. Meet state standards.

arning



School on the grounds of St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church.



Vanessa Lacter, 11, works on a geography project individually while other students work as a group behind her.

MONTESSORI AT A GLANCE

FOUNDER: Maria Montessori, who earned her medical degree in Italy in 1896, suspected, while working at an asylum in Rome, that the mentally deficient children confronting her were merely deprived of stimulation. She observed, too, that public schoolchildren were lined up at rows of desks confined in long lines of rooms like box cars in a freight train running along parallel tracks, mechanically following a prescribed curriculum.

She set about creating a learning climate that was less like an assembly line and more suited to children's diverse abilities.

She gave up her medical practice and devoted her life to teaching. She created sensory-rich objects that children could manipulate, and "points of

delight," such as a Chinese vase placed on a bright piece of silk, intended to create a magical, stimulating, responsive learning environment for the child. Anne Frank attended a Montessori school in Amsterdam.

HISTORY: St. Mary's School was opened in 1866. EWMS opened in 1971 and began leasing St. Mary's school building in 1975.

ENROLLMENT: 64 students, part time, full time and extended care. Student/teacher ratio 10:1. The Workshop is the most racially integrated nonpublic school in Delaware. Children come from all economic levels.

TUITION AND HOURS: \$7,200 per year, full day; \$4,860 half day. Extra for extended care. School day 8:20 a.m. to 3 p.m. Before and after hours available.

FYI

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LOCATION: 502 Pine St.,
Wilmington

CONTACT: McCrae Harrison,
director, 656-1498. Web site:
www.elementaryworkshop.org

ACCREDITATIONS: EWMS is a private, independent, not-for-profit organization, accredited by the American Montessori Society and the Middle States Association of College and Schools, and must meet state standards.

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