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From the Puget Sound Business Journal:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/seattle/news/2020/07/10/seattle-nativity-school-quadruples-footprint.html>

Low-income STEM school founded by Amazon employee quadruples footprint

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A Catholic STEM-focused middle school serving low-income students in Seattle has moved to a new location, more than quadrupling its footprint and tripling its student capacity.

The school moved to St. Edward parish, which had hosted a school that recently merged with another parish school, June 30. In so doing, it expanded its footprint from 7,900 square feet to 35,529 square feet across 11 classrooms, a library and some office space.

More than 20 students have already applied for the incoming sixth-grade class, said president Jeffrey McDougall, who expects the new physical location, between Rainier Avenue and Martin Luther King Jr. Way, the two major roads, to drive up interest.

Seattle Nativity School, founded by then-Microsoft General Manager Michael Mott, provides a free, STEM-based private education to sixth through eighth graders below the poverty line. The grant- and donation-driven model seeks to break the cycle of poverty through providing a tuition-free, high-caliber education.

The school operates on an extended school day and extended academic year, offers small class sizes, helps students apply for high schools and stays connected with them through graduation and into their higher education and careers.

Seattle Nativity started within one former kindergarten classroom at Our Lady of Mt. Virgin Parish in Seattle and grew to three small classrooms in three years. Last year, the school had 40 students.

"We had adolescents, who only got bigger every year, in a pretty small space," McDougall said. "And so really from the beginning, we were always looking for a new location so we could expand and serve the students."

The school launched in 2013. While between 25 and 30 students wanted to enter the program during the last admissions cycle, Mott said, they could only admit 15.

"Sadly we had to say, we can't fit you," Mott said, "even though they might have met all requirements and shown the commitment. So we're excited by the fact that now if we have (interest from) 30 students ... we have space for them."

Mott grew up in a Catholic family, and visited a friend during his tenure at Microsoft whose father ran a nativity-style school in Durham, North Carolina. The idea stuck with Mott. He participated in the Big Brothers, Big Sisters program in Hoboken, New Jersey, during his early adulthood, and said he wished he had done more to support his "little brother" in the program, who disappeared from Mott's life and fell back into the cycle of poverty.

"I couldn't get nativity off my mind at that point," Mott said. "I had a bunch of phone calls with people at the nativity



SEATTLE NATIVITY SCHOOL

Seattle Nativity School moved to St. Edward parish, where it quadrupled its footprint.

school in Portland, people at the nativity network, and said, 'Hey this is going to be something I would love to do.'"

Mott toured nativity schools during his sabbatical from Microsoft in 2010. He raised funds from Seattle Prep, Seattle University and the Fulcrum Foundation to study the feasibility of founding a nativity school in Seattle. After raising \$250,000 and producing a summer pilot program, Seattle Nativity raised nearly \$1 million to launch its first official class in 2013.

The school's inaugural class of sixth graders just graduated high school. Some of those grads plan to attend [Gonzaga University](#), [Washington State University](#) and Georgetown. Mott said the school has also tripled its number of supporters and increased commitments from early donors.

Microsoft donated Surface devices to Seattle Nativity four years ago to provide the foundation for the school's one-to-one device program. Amazon, Mott's current employer, has also been supportive of the effort, bringing engineers to Seattle Nativity for its Hour of Code event each year and supplying a technology grant amid the pandemic.

"From a tech perspective, it's been great because I've been able to bring people into the school to expose students to everything from Xbox to virtual reality," Mott said. "So my network of generous friends and professionals have come to the school and shown the kids what technology can do, whether it's robotics or VR or game development. I'll tell you, you've got the kids' attention when you start talking about Xbox games."

Paxtyn Merten

Staff writer

Puget Sound Business Journal

