

Christine Kelley

In this series, **International School of Orange County (iSchoolOC)** educators speak about what the school means to them and how the **Annual Fund** enhances their ability to provide the children with the best possible education.

What brought you to the International School of Orange County (iSchoolOC)?

When I came to live in the United States as a newlywed, I was searching for work as an educator and it was very important to me that our school is the only one in the area accredited by the French Ministry of Education. I also knew I wanted to have children and they would benefit from the French system of education.

What factors motivate you to return each school year?

Overall, the feeling of belonging to a community allows me to grow as an educator and motivates me to come back each year. I am influenced greatly by the students, the parents and, of course, my colleagues. Students are my number one as it is a privilege to help little minds grow and become happy, confident, informed, responsible and involved citizens of the world. It's amazing when you see a child having difficulties in a subject and then see them feel confident and aware of their progress. As an educator, you get goosebumps; it is very satisfying to know you are helping them flourish. The best compliment any parent can give me is being told their child is happy to come to school and learn.

Also, the parents show great involvement and collaboration with the school and their children's learning process. I love the fact parents are engaged and tell them at the beginning of every school year it will be teamwork. It's not just educators, parents have to be involved in the learning process as well.

Last but not least are my colleagues. I like to think we are different wagons on the same train, working collectively to help all students according to their needs. I never feel alone in the school and always have the support of my coworkers to find solutions and share ideas.

What aspects of the French educational approach are most beneficial to the students, both in the short and long term?

Bilingual education is a gift we can give to our children. It is proven to be tremendously beneficial to increasing a child's ability to recognize patterns, think creatively and solve problems. As important, our school offers a multicultural learning environment that teaches students to be respectful and interested in other cultures. We tell the children that they're all different and they're all beautiful, and in turn they learn to have fun with someone very different from them and benefit greatly from those differences. In today's global environment, learning to connect, communicate and respect people of different cultural backgrounds is very important.

As you know, iSchoolOC tuition does not cover all operating costs of the school. The Annual Fund is a crucial mechanism in covering expenses such as Smartboards and other student-centric equipment and activities. What have you used past annual funds to assist with in your classroom?

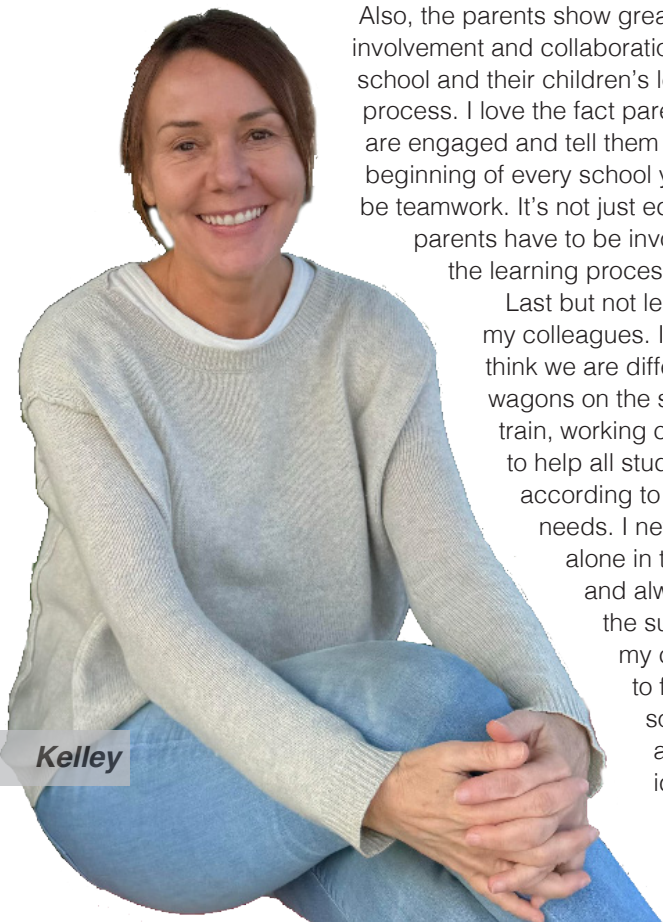
We have new Smartboards and iPads, and one of the most amazing tools is the VoiceThread software platform, which is a resource parents can also benefit from using. I regularly encourage parents to take advantage of the VoiceThread activities, particularly those parents who are not native French speakers. Also, a good point to add is that we as employees of the school (including educators, aides and administrative staff) also participate in the Annual Fund.

What could you do with additional funding and resources from the Annual Fund?

We have reached full capacity at this campus, which is amazing. However, there are no more classrooms to offer additional growth. We need financial support to find a new campus, which is a lot of work. Wouldn't it be nice to have just a classroom for art or music? We used to have a media lab but because our enrollment outpaced our capacity, we no longer do. Additional resources could really help the school flourish and it will be a pity to not accept more students because we don't have the space.

Are there any additional items on your dream list?

What I would love is a yearly garden where all year long kids could grow vegetables, fruits and herbs and we could make fruit and vegetable salads. Growing a garden and having the patience to wait and see it grow and then be able to actually eat it, I would love it!



Kelley