

Nurturing the Young as a Catalyst for Healthy Communities



Flance Early Learning Center, St. Louis, Missouri

Founded with the desire that all children have the best possible start in life, regardless of their families' socioeconomic development, Flance Early Learning Center addresses healthy development in a comprehensive way. By providing their children, families, staff, and community with resources and education, Flance encourages them to be environmentally and health-conscious, catalyzing positive change within their communities. Nestled into the Carr Square neighborhood, Flance provides care to a diverse group of approximately 100 children between the ages of 6 weeks and 6 years old. An independent school with most of their students coming from the surrounding neighborhoods, Flance is able to provide reduced rates to families in need as part of the Head Start program which currently includes 86% of their students.

Making Healthy Life Choices

Food is an important pathway towards having a healthy life. Flance's chef prepares nourishing meals, including homemade baby food, for their students incorporating a variety of fruits and vegetables daily. They use healthy, seasonal, local food to make fun meals or snacks with the children. Students who may have otherwise felt neutral or disinterested in the produce become excited when they are able to help create a meal with it. Deliberate programming includes ongoing nutrition education, gardening education, physical activities, outdoor playtime, and nutrition and health-based professional development at least twice a year for staff. Flance houses an on-site health clinic in partnership with Affinia Healthcare to provide medical screenings for Flance families and additional partners provide vision, hearing, dental and mental health services to the students at the school. Providing these onsite services saves families' time, money, and stress. These services have been used more than 200 times by Flances student population over the last year.



Spotlight



Teachers are able to utilize the crafted outdoor space to get their students out of the classroom.

Missouri Green Schools is a recognition and tracking program co-managed by U.S. Green Building Council – Missouri Gateway Chapter and Missouri Environmental Education Association. The program is designed to help Missouri schools improve the health and wellness of students and staff, reduce environmental impact, and incorporate environmental and sustainability education. Schools can see stronger educational outcomes and reduced costs as a result of changes that also help the environment. These changes can happen throughout the school building and grounds, educational programming, and culture.



It's been amazing from the beginning and still current from the food boxes, diverse curriculum, friendly & caring staff to healthcare providers coming on site for necessary check ups and routines. I love it!

– Flance Parent

The Results

- 2021 U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon School Honoree
- Gold Level Healthy Way to Grow Center by the American Heart Association (Oct 2020)
- As a designated EnVision Center by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, from May-Dec 2020 Flance provided over 25 tons of free fresh produce valued at over \$180,000 to Flance families and their 63106 community (one of the poorest zip codes in Missouri and a food desert) via a weekly Free Fresh Food Box program. This work continues today through a partnership with The Bailey Foundation.
- Breastfeeding Friendly Worksite Award (Gold Level) by Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services

Shaping the Campus to Support Health

Flance was built with LEED Certification in mind. They intentionally created a space that supports their goals in health and sustainability. The large glass windows and doors throughout the building have multiple purposes. Daylighting is used in 90% of spaces to reduce the need for having the lights on and flexible lighting control solutions in classrooms to minimize the need for all lights to be on depending on the needs of the room. Every single classroom has direct access to a fresh air space. Flance has three playgrounds, each for specific age groups, and an urban garden. This, along with the required physical activity everyday, encourages the children to stay active. Health and the environment are embedded in the curriculum, from math lessons that involve making a healthy snack to vocabulary acquisition reflective of the natural world and valuing stewardship. Community partnerships further enhance these efforts. For example, Urban Harvest helps Flance with nutrition education. They incorporate Urban Harvest's expertise in the curriculum for Pre-K classrooms, which includes planting, harvesting, gardening, and natural scavenger hunts. This holistic view on health, sustainability, and education is why Flance was named a 2021 **U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon School**.



Spotlight

In August 2020, Flance initiated an after-school program that encourages neighborhood youth between the ages of 8 – 14 to be engaged in outdoor activities, specifically with the community garden.



Interested in partnering with Missouri Green Schools?

The Missouri Green Schools team is here to help you build a healthier, more sustainable future for your students, staff, and community! Learn more at MissouriGreenSchools.org or contact us at mgs@meea.org.

The following programs for Missouri schools compliment one another. Schools may participate in one or all. The school highlighted in this case study has participated in those marked with a check.

- ✓ Missouri Green Schools
- ✓ U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools
- ✓ Green Schools Quest: A Project Based Challenge issued by USGBC-Missouri Gateway Chapter