



Director of Finance

Start Date: on or before October 1, 2025

Co-ed Day School, 6 months - grade 8; 558 students

Chicago, Illinois

<https://www.nnms.org>

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Educators Collaborative is pleased to be assisting Near North Montessori School in their search for a Director of Finance to begin on or before October 1, 2025.

A Transformational Opportunity for a Finance Executive

Near North Montessori School (NNM), one of the nation's most respected and enduring Montessori institutions, seeks a seasoned financial professional to serve as its next Director of Finance. This is a compelling opportunity for a strategic and operationally savvy finance executive who excels at building strong systems, leading teams, and serving as a trusted thought partner to the Head of School—helping to guide school-wide decision-making with integrity, clarity, and foresight. The successful candidate will bring the ability to provide direction to HR functions, lead with professionalism and care, and implement effective, mission-aligned compensation practices that support the school's ability to attract and retain exceptional talent.

The ideal candidate will combine deep financial expertise with a collaborative spirit and the presence to support a passionate and emerging leadership team—while also embracing the day-to-day rhythm of school life. An ability to connect with educators, students, and families, and to lead with professionalism and integrity, is essential. With a strong foundation and exciting growth ahead, NNM offers the chance to make a lasting impact at a school with deep community roots and a forward-looking vision.

A Distinguished Montessori School at the Crossroads of Tradition and Progress

Near North Montessori has served generations of children and families since its founding in 1963. Established by a group of committed parents who envisioned a more child-centered and holistic approach to education, the school began as a small cooperative rooted in the teachings of Dr. Maria Montessori. These founding families worked together—sharing responsibilities, contributing time and resources, and shaping a community that would honor children's natural development and respect their individuality. This cooperative spirit became the foundation of Near North Montessori's culture and continues to influence its values today.

What began in a church basement with a single classroom has evolved into a thriving independent school committed to whole-child development and lifelong learning. From its earliest days, the school embraced progressive ideals—encouraging independence, fostering curiosity, and building a sense of responsibility and respect in even the youngest learners. The school cultivates independence, intellectual curiosity, and social responsibility in students from toddler through middle school.



The school's campus, located in the heart of Chicago's Wicker Park neighborhood, is steeped in character and purpose. Near North Montessori occupies a five-story building that was originally constructed as a Catholic girls' school. Repurposed with care and vision, the facility blends architectural charm with modern educational functionality. It now features a rooftop farm, a recently renovated gymnasium, an innovation and design space, and soon, a reimagined playground—all designed to foster experiential learning and joyful discovery. The surrounding neighborhood, once a hub for Eastern European immigrant communities, has evolved into one of Chicago's most eclectic and dynamic areas. Today, Wicker Park is home to families, artists, entrepreneurs, and a diverse array of small businesses, restaurants, and cultural institutions. Its walkable streets and urban energy mirror the vibrancy of the Near North Montessori community.

That community is notably local and engaged: students come from across the city, with many walking, biking, or being dropped off by parents. Staff members are often part of this same rhythm, reinforcing the school's deep roots in its immediate environment and its reputation as a trusted neighborhood institution.

With strong enrollment, a healthy financial foundation, and deep community loyalty, Near North Montessori is entering an exciting chapter. The school's leadership team is committed and emerging, and the organization is actively strengthening its internal systems—especially in the areas of finance, strategy, and operations. The next Director of Finance will be essential to this work, helping to further develop the school's infrastructure while honoring its mission and roots.



Mission

Near North Montessori's mission is to guide the development of each child to reach their fullest potential—academically, socially, emotionally, and ethically—by providing an authentic Montessori education rooted in independence, curiosity, and responsibility.

Beliefs and Community Attributes

- Our Students are active participants in their learning, developing independence, empathy, and critical thinking from the earliest years. They thrive in an environment that nurtures self-direction and creativity and are encouraged to make meaningful contributions to their classrooms, their communities, and the world around them.
- Our Guides (Teachers) are highly trained Montessori educators who embrace the dual role of facilitator and mentor. Deeply committed to child development, they create respectful and responsive environments where students are empowered to explore, inquire, and grow. Our guides pursue ongoing professional development to remain at the forefront of Montessori practice and whole-child education.
- Our Parents and Families are essential partners in the educational journey. They are active members of a vibrant, engaged school community and support NNM's mission by reinforcing its

values at home and contributing their time, talents, and insights to enrich the life of the school.

- Our Learning Environment combines rigorous academic standards with intentional social and emotional development. In carefully prepared classrooms and dynamic co-curricular programs, students develop confidence, collaboration, and a lifelong love of learning.
- Our Preparation for the Future begins with cultivating curiosity and agency. Students emerge from NNM with the ability to think critically, act with compassion, and advocate for themselves and others—ready to contribute meaningfully in high school, college, and beyond.

- Our Community is inclusive, intentional, and deeply rooted in a shared commitment to Montessori values. We embrace diversity of thought, background, and experience, and we believe that every child has the right—and the ability—to learn, grow, and belong. We are guided by the principles of equity, justice, and peace, and strive to model those ideals in our daily actions and decisions.

The Campus and Surrounding Area

Near North Montessori has invested significantly in updating and expanding its facilities to support experiential learning, creativity, and community engagement.

Notable campus features include:

- A rooftop urban farm used for science and sustainability education
- A newly renovated gymnasium that supports physical education and schoolwide events
- A dedicated Innovation and Design Lab for STEM exploration and hands-on learning
- A reimagined outdoor playground is currently under development
- Light-filled classrooms designed to foster independence and collaboration

A Wise Steward of Growth and Change: Head of School Angela Garcia



Angela G. Garcia joined Near North Montessori as Head of School in April 2024, bringing more than 35 years of experience in independent school leadership. She has held senior roles at a wide range of mission-driven institutions, including St. Stephen's & St. Agnes School, The Bishop Walker School for Boys, and Friends Community School.

Angela holds a bachelor's degree from Brown University, a master's in education from the University of Pennsylvania, and an Advanced Leadership certificate from Harvard's Graduate School of Education. She is also AMI-certified as a Montessori Administrator.

Angela's leadership is strategic, grounded, and deeply aligned with Montessori values. She has quickly become a trusted, thoughtful presence at NNM, and her tenure marks a moment of organizational reflection and forward-looking focus. As the school continues to evolve, Angela is leading with vision and care—laying the groundwork for systems that will support long-term sustainability and joyful learning for generations to come.

- A Montessori-curated library and music room
- Flexible spaces for community meetings and performances

Located just two miles from downtown Chicago, Near North Montessori is part of the diverse and vibrant Wicker Park community. Known for its mix of historic charm and modern energy, the neighborhood is home to an eclectic blend of families, artists, entrepreneurs, and local businesses. An array of restaurants, cafes, art galleries, and shops are within walking distance of the school.



The school is well-connected to public transportation. The CTA Blue Line (Division stop) is a short walk away, offering a direct link to downtown and O'Hare International Airport. Several major bus lines serve the area, and the Metra Clybourn Station—providing easy access to Chicago's northern suburbs—is less than ten minutes away by car or bike.

Nearby green spaces such as Eckhart Park and the 606 Trail offer opportunities for outdoor play, athletics, and community events. Cultural institutions like the Museum of Contemporary Art, Lincoln Park Zoo, and Navy Pier are just a short drive or train ride away, making the area an ideal home base for a school deeply committed to integrating learning with the wider world.

This uniquely urban setting enhances the school's strong sense of community: many students walk, bike, or are dropped off by parents who live nearby, and faculty often live in the neighborhood as well—reinforcing Near North Montessori's role as both a beloved educational institution and a vital part of the Wicker Park fabric.



Operational and Financial Facts and Figures

In addition to the Director of Finance, NNM's business office staff includes the Controller, Director of Human Resources, Financial Operations Coordinator, Senior Accounts Payable Specialist, and Accounts Payable Specialist.

The School's annual budget is currently \$15,000,000; about 86% of revenue is generated by net tuition receipts. NNM has Board-restricted funds of approximately \$7.5 million. The School raises about \$1,000,000 each year from its annual fund and fundraising events and carries approximately \$7 million of debt, which will be refinanced in the coming months. Total enrollment is currently 558 students, a figure that has been steady for several years. The School also administers employee health benefits through a self-insurance model, which presents ongoing considerations for financial oversight and long-term planning.

As the above suggests, the School's current financial drivers are robust and sustainable.



The Opportunity to Become Near North Montessori's Next Director of Finance

Near North Montessori has launched a national search to identify its next Director of Finance, who will assume responsibilities no later than October 1, 2025. This is a newly created position, established as part of a recent reorganization that separates Finance from Operations to allow for more focused strategic leadership in both areas. It represents a compelling opportunity for a strategic, values-aligned finance executive to shape the role, build strong systems, and guide the school's financial future in close partnership with the Head of School.

As a key member of the school's senior leadership team, the Director of Finance will oversee budgeting and forecasting, financial reporting and compliance, investment and risk management, and the supervision of the Business Office and HR staff. In addition to driving financial strategy, the Director will serve as a key advisor and collaborator with the Head of School and be a thought partner to leaders across the school—including those in Enrollment, Advancement, and Operations.

This is a highly visible and relational role within a school community that values professionalism, transparency, collaboration, and integrity. The next Director of Finance will be expected to engage with staff, families, trustees, and faculty with both clarity and warmth—bringing sound judgment, operational savvy, and a genuine appreciation for the school environment.

Carol Santos and George Sanderson of Educators Collaborative, LLC, are assisting Near North Montessori in this search. Based on a comprehensive site visit and conversations with key stakeholders, Carol and George have gathered the following themes that reflect the community's shared perspective on

the school's strengths, the leadership qualities most needed in this role, and the opportunities that lie ahead for the next Director of Finance.

Strengths of the School

Near North Montessori (NNM) is justifiably proud of its strong sense of community, educational legacy, and dedicated leadership. Across multiple conversations, faculty, staff, trustees, and parents described the school as a place of deep belonging—where families and staff are united by shared values, and where the Montessori philosophy inspires both academic excellence and a profound respect for the whole child.

NNM has built a strong foundation and is poised for its next chapter. The school enjoys stable enrollment, a robust wait list, and a healthy financial position. At the same time, its leadership team and Board have embraced the need for a more intentional focus on long-term financial strategy, stronger systems, and more transparent structures to support growth and sustainability.

Key strengths and opportunities identified during our visit include:

- A committed and emerging leadership team. The senior administrative team is energetic, mission-driven, and highly engaged. They bring strong instincts and a collaborative spirit to their roles, and they have endorsed the need for increased financial expertise and guidance. The next Director of Finance will be a valued thought partner—helping to shape school-wide decision-making and embedding financial acumen across all areas of operations, enrollment, advancement, and HR.
- Financially, the school is on solid ground, with a Board-designated reserve of approximately \$7.5 million and strong tuition revenue supported by consistent, full enrollment. The next Director of Finance will have the opportunity to serve as a key advisor and strategist in evaluating how this fiscal strength could support the school's long-term financial sustainability—including the potential establishment of an endowment.
- A culture of collaboration and trust. The community values honesty, professionalism, and shared purpose. Transparency and clarity are highly prized in communications—especially around budgeting, tuition, and compensation—and the next Director of Finance will be expected to lead with integrity and empathy.
- A forward-thinking and engaged Board of Directors. Trustees bring a clear sense of fiduciary responsibility and are eager to work with a strategic partner who can help translate the school's aspirations into sound financial plans. The Board supports the Head's vision and recognizes the importance of investment in infrastructure, systems, and staff.
- Enrollment is strong, with opportunities to enhance support and strategy. NNM is fully enrolled and enjoys an excellent reputation in the local market. At the same time, there is room to improve the finance office's "customer service" orientation to ensure that families experience clarity and ease around tuition and billing. Additionally, the Director of Finance will serve as a strategic

advisor on enrollment modeling, tuition planning, and long-term sustainability.

- Strong endorsement for an expert-led compensation strategy. Both the Head of School and the Board have expressed interest in developing a more transparent and strategically aligned approach to employee compensation. This includes salary benchmarking, benefit structure evaluation, and clear communication practices. The next Director of Finance will help design, implement, and monitor these practices to support recruitment, retention, and equity across staff roles. Done well, this work can also build trust among employees by demonstrating institutional responsiveness and fairness—addressing concerns that, in other school communities, have contributed to unionization efforts.
- Community openness to financial education. Faculty, staff, and trustees have expressed an eagerness to deepen their understanding of the school's financial direction and the key drivers of budgeting. The Director of Finance will have the opportunity to lead in building shared knowledge and transparency, empowering others to make informed, mission-aligned decisions.
- A collaborative path forward. The recent reorganization, which separates Finance and Operations, was made with clarity and foresight. The creation of the Director of Finance role offers a unique chance to reimagine systems and structures while reinforcing NNM's values and priorities. The school community is aligned in its commitment to operational excellence and is eager to welcome a leader who brings both technical acumen and a collegial spirit to the work.



OPPORTUNITIES, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND CHALLENGES AHEAD

Reporting directly to the Head of School and serving as a trusted advisor to the Board on financial and strategic matters, the Director of Finance holds the following responsibilities and opportunities for leadership:

- **Strategic Partnership with the Head of School:** Serve as a trusted advisor to Angela Garcia, providing financial insight and direction to inform decision-making, guide planning conversations, and strengthen organizational alignment around priorities and trade-offs. This partnership is essential to shaping the school's next chapter.
- **Financial Strategy and Oversight:** Build and manage robust financial systems, including multi-year forecasting, annual budgeting, cash flow planning, investment management, and risk mitigation.
- **Finance Office and HR Leadership:** Lead and develop a small but dedicated Finance Office team, improving office functions and overseeing HR functions, including compliance, benefits, and compensation administration—with a focus on professionalism, clear communication, and trust.
- **Board Committee Support and Partnership:** Provide Board committees (especially the Finance Committee) with timely, accurate, thoughtfully designed reports and information that support their strategic work and fiduciary role. The Director of Finance will have regular interaction with trustees on financial matters and strategy and take a leadership role in participating in Finance Committee meetings.
- **Compensation Strategy and Transparency:** Partner with the Head of School and Board to review, implement, and communicate a compensation strategy that is competitive, equitable, and mission-aligned. This is an endorsed area of focus for both leadership and governance.
- **Evaluating Benefits Strategy and Self-Insurance Model:** Conduct a cost-benefit analysis of the current self-insurance structure and explore alternative models that ensure financial sustainability while maintaining competitive and mission-aligned benefits.
- **Cross-Functional Collaboration:** Be a visible, engaged presence across campus—working closely with the senior team, especially in Advancement, Enrollment, Operations, and Academics—to ensure that financial stewardship supports broader institutional goals.
- **Budgeting and Community Education:** Lead the development of annual and long-term budgets and help bring more clarity around the school finance model and its key drivers. issues to non-finance professionals. Educate staff, trustees, and the broader community on how financial decisions are made and what underpins them.
- **Customer Service and Internal Culture:** Enhance the Finance Office's responsiveness and accessibility to families, faculty, and staff—delivering timely, clear, and respectful service that reinforces a culture of professionalism and belonging.

- Compensation and Benefits Infrastructure: Partner with HR to evaluate and improve processes and systems related to payroll, compliance, performance management, and benefits.
- Enrollment and Retention Support: With full enrollment and healthy interest in the school, collaborate with Enrollment and Academic leaders to ensure sound financial modeling and sustainable practices that support retention and long-term programmatic strength.
- Fundraising Finance Partnership: Support the Advancement Office with improved accounting, reconciliation, and collection procedures. Provide guidance as the school continues to celebrate and build on two consecutive record-breaking years of fundraising.
- Facilities and Capital Planning Insight: Partner with the Director of Operations and the Board's Buildings & Grounds Committee to review deferred maintenance planning and help evaluate future capital priorities from a financial perspective.

This is a multifaceted leadership opportunity for a strategic, collaborative finance executive who enjoys building systems, educating partners, and serving a mission they believe in. The successful candidate will bring not only technical skill but also clarity, warmth, and a genuine commitment to community.



Skills and Attributes of the Next Director of Finance

Near North Montessori seeks a strategic, relational, and operationally savvy finance executive to serve as its next Director of Finance. The school values integrity, professionalism, community, and mission alignment—and seeks a leader who shares these commitments and brings strong financial acumen to a dynamic educational environment.

The successful candidate will be energized by the opportunity to shape systems, educate colleagues, and help drive the school's long-term sustainability in close partnership with the Head of School and other members of the senior leadership team.

The ideal candidate will demonstrate many of the following qualifications, skills, and attributes:

- Bachelor's Degree required; an advanced degree in a related field is preferred; MBA or CPA preferred
- At least 8–10 years of progressively responsible experience in financial leadership roles; prior experience in an independent school or mission-driven nonprofit is strongly preferred
- Ability to integrate effectively into the culture of not-for-profit independent schools while implementing strategies and tactics necessary for successful operations of the business
- Operational orientation with an ability to assess and improve processes for efficiency, clarity, and service
- Significant experience with increasing responsibility supervising other personnel and managing multiple projects and programs
- Ability to lead and manage multiple priorities while maintaining precision and attention to detail
- Strong management, negotiation, and project management skills
- Experience managing a budget
- Strategic thinker with demonstrated experience in budgeting, forecasting, cash flow planning, investment oversight, audit compliance, and risk management
- Strong working knowledge of accounting principles (GAAP) and nonprofit/fund accounting
- Comfort with leading compensation strategy and analysis; ability to support the Board and Head of School in aligning compensation practices with school values and resources
- Experience educating non-finance professionals about budgeting principles and financial decision-making

- Outstanding verbal, written, and interpersonal communication skills; ability to convey complex financial information clearly and transparently
- High emotional intelligence and ability to engage respectfully and productively with staff, trustees, families, and external vendors
- An open and collaborative work style; Collaborative mindset and leadership style; ability to partner across departments, including Enrollment, Advancement, Operations, and Academics
- A positive outlook and a sense of humor
- A high level of integrity and a strong work ethic; Integrity, sound judgment, and commitment to confidentiality and fiduciary responsibility
- Discretion and the ability to handle confidential and sensitive matters appropriately
- State of the art computer skills; Proficiency in Google Suite: familiarity with Google applications including Google Docs, Google Calendar, Gmail, Google Presentation, Google Spreadsheet; facility working with databases such as Blackbaud and FACTS
- Proficiency in Microsoft Office Word, PowerPoint, and Excel, as well as Canva and Constant Contact, or willingness to quickly learn and become intimately familiar with these platforms
- Ability to travel if needed, as well as attend events on evenings and weekends
- Flexibility with working evenings, weekends, and holidays as assigned

A complete, detailed job description is available to candidates upon their application for this position.

How to Apply

Applications will be reviewed when they are received.

Candidates interested in this position are asked to submit the following materials in a single merged PDF document, in the order listed:

- [EC Candidate Summary Sheet](#) (you'll be asked to make a copy upon opening)
- Letter of interest, addressed to the Head of School
- Current résumé
- A list of five or more references with contact information (including phone numbers and email addresses)
- [Disclosure Form](#) (you'll be asked to make a copy upon opening)

Please send applications and address inquiries to:

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