



**CLONLARA
SCHOOL**

IMPACT REPORT 2024

**global learning
community**

**FOUNDED
1967**



mission

Clonlara School's mission is to transform education on a global scale through a highly personalized approach that fosters authenticity, autonomy, and joy in the learning process.

philosophy

Schools must empower learners to participate purposefully and eagerly in their own education.

Experience tells us that children learn best when their interests guide their activities and that parents have the right and ability to educate their children.

We believe that learning begins with curiosity, and that a school should allow students to take part in designing and implementing their curriculum. When students' personal interests drive their educational activities, their motivation grows, and their learning is deeper and longer lasting.

Our approach to education leads to a lifelong love of learning.



a letter from our executive director

Dear Clonlara families and friends,

Growing up, I was fortunate enough to have caring teachers who nurtured my skills and talents, great friends who shared my joys, and the freedom to follow my passions. However, my early experiences working in education showed me that not everyone gets the same experiences. Working at schools it was difficult to “just do my job,” because I was not aligned with what was happening. I tried to help others understand that there are alternative methods for learning and teaching, and I learned that changing a fixed mindset can be a daunting task.

After years of actively promoting alternative education and supporting homeschooling families, teachers, and projects, I discovered Clonlara School.

Pat Montgomery founded Clonlara in 1967 with the vision of creating a school that would empower students to direct their own education based on their interests and passions. I realized this school was aligned with everything I already knew to be true about education and students. It brought to life the kind of education I envisioned for my children and for the world, and I saw endless possibilities!

In 2015, Chandra Montgomery Nicol invited me to start Clonlara’s Portuguese Program, and I felt a mission inside me to do so. I jumped in wholeheartedly to carry a torch and spread the beauty of freedom in education to families, schools, and society.



Sofia Gallis
Executive Director



Since starting at Clonlara, I have served in various roles, from advising and starting new programs to setting the pace for others. I have been the European director and the global research and development director. I never envisioned myself becoming the executive director, but Chandra kindly and wisely led the way—and here I am!

Working at Clonlara has been a true joy for me. Though no job or path is perfect, the culture at Clonlara makes it an amazing place to work. Being a strong, mission-driven organization helps us make every action count towards the impact we want to see in the world. There is a will to find solutions if there is a need. Clonlara is a living organism that is expanding its footprint in many lands and spreading seeds worldwide. It provides joy, autonomy, and authenticity to many learning journeys.

“Being a strong, mission-driven organization helps us make every action count towards the impact we want to see in the world.”

But we do face our challenges. When the pandemic hit, the whole world had to deal with changes and challenges! Education worldwide had to be reinvented when everyone had to stay home, and many parents had to stop working or move their work home. For some, this situation redefined the concepts of home, work, family, and education, and prompted a deep reflection about their time and life. During this time, many new families who had never considered homeschooling joined us, and we were ready to support them in their new learning journey. We quickly introduced ways to increase the sense of belonging in our global learning community through online clubs, live webinars, and Celebrations of Learning.

Even before the pandemic, we’ve watched many industries evolve and innovate constantly. But not education. Many psychological and pedagogical theories that support a different approach to learning are not new; some are 100 years old. New discoveries in neuroscience continue to reinforce these theories, but the world still does not pay enough attention. Education as a whole continues to repeat the same systems and formulas of the past centuries. We still face challenges, bureaucracy, and a lack of understanding from a world that does not fully grasp the importance of child-centered education.

However, things are slowly changing. There are now many more schools and projects around the world that use alternative approaches to traditional systems and support a student-centered approach. Minds are slowly opening to new possibilities.

Back in 1985, Clonlara was featured in a magazine as “a school of the future.” We still believe we are the school needed for the present and the future.



Clonlara believes that education should be student-centered, and that personalized learning is the key to unlocking the full potential of every learner. We have been at the forefront of this approach for over 50 years, and our roots run deep. We have been supporting thousands of families, schools, and learning projects around the world, providing personalized learning experiences that are tailored to each individual student.

Our focus is on creating a respectful learning environment that fosters a love of learning, and we believe that, with our off-campus families and partner schools, we can transform education on a global scale.

Our aim is to inspire students to reach their full potential and become lifelong learners who are passionate about education.

We will keep trusting and implementing our approach, and we know the world will catch up!

***“Personalized learning
is the key to unlocking
the full potential of
every learner.”***



Sofia Gallis
Executive Director



OUR IMPACT

“

Clonlara has boosted my confidence. It has given me the ability to trust in my perspective and explore subjects I truly enjoy.

”

— Kirtna, Off-Campus Program Student



Clonlara in numbers



1

GLOBAL LEARNING COMMUNITY



50,000+

STUDENTS SERVED



57

YEARS

400+

COLLEGES

2

PROGRAMS

5

AFFILIATES

6

LANGUAGES

70+

COUNTRIES

106

STAFF MEMBERS WORLDWIDE



growth in 5 years

	2019–20	2023–24
Students supported	1,506 from 40+ countries	2,421 from 70+ countries
Graduates	115 from 21 countries	212 from 35 countries
Staff members	45 from 8 countries	106 from 12 countries

61% ↑

INCREASE IN
NUMBER OF STUDENTS
SUPPORTED

84% ↑

INCREASE IN
GRADUATING
CLASS SIZE

136% ↑

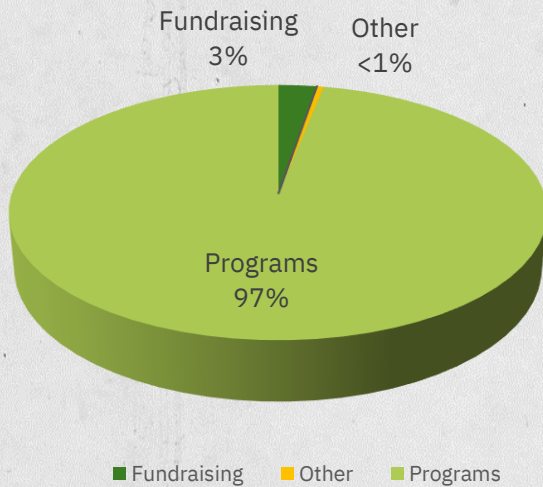
INCREASE IN
NUMBER OF STAFF
MEMBERS

financial summary 2023–24

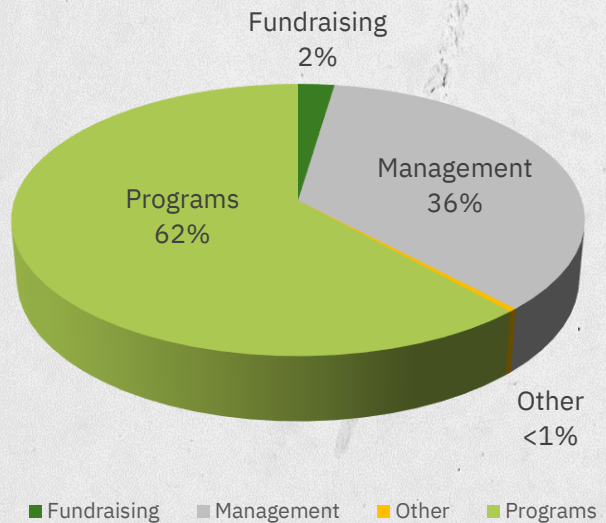
\$3,663,155
REVENUE

\$3,646,935
EXPENSES

2023–24 Revenue

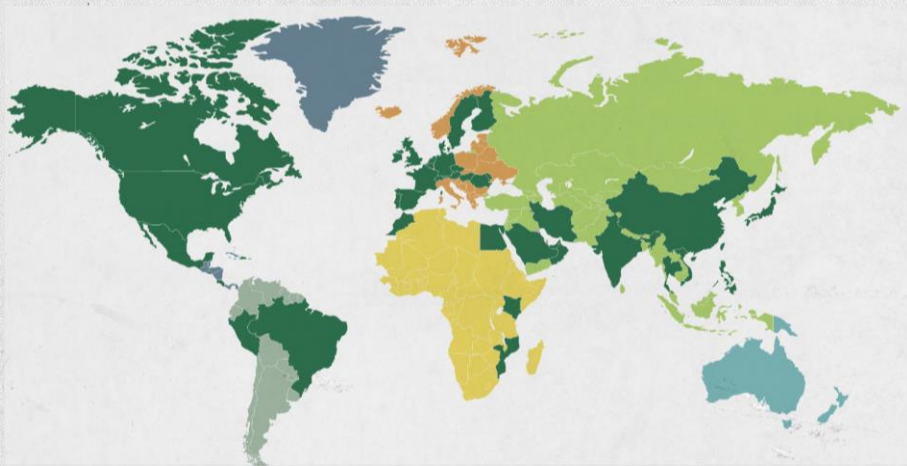


2023–24 Expenses

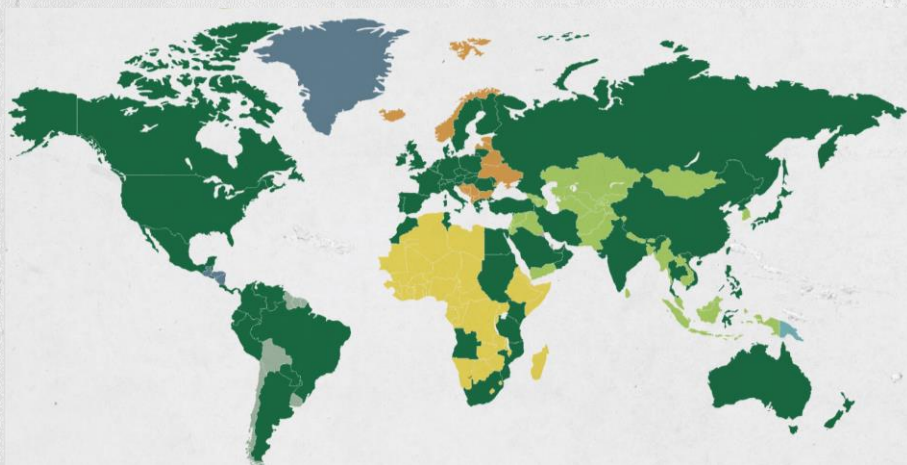


we are turning the world green!

Clonlara is a global learning community. Our students live all around the world! Each dark green country you see is a country Clonlara students call home.



2017-18



2022-23

our programs

Campus

A classroom the size of your imagination

Clonlara's original campus is located in Ann Arbor, Michigan. It offers a small, multiage setting where students create and learn in a relaxed and welcoming environment. Our supportive campus community is made up of engaged students and families, experienced teachers, and trusted mentors connected to one another and to other Clonlara families around the world.

Off-Campus

A school with no walls, overlooking the world

The Off-Campus Program began in 1979 as an extension of the original campus school into the homes of families across the United States and, eventually, numerous other countries. Today the Off-Campus Program provides students and their families around the world the flexibility and freedom to choose how and what they want to learn.

Online Courses

Distance Learning with Caring Support

Clonlara's online courses provide a convenient option for students in grades 6–12 who are looking to complement their learning with “ready-to-go” material on a wide range of subjects from introductory to advanced level. Students have the freedom to complete online coursework at their own pace with the support of a teacher to answer questions and grade assignments.

Clonlara School is accredited by:

Accreditation International (Ai)

Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSA-CES)

National Council for Private School Accreditation (NCPA)



alumni spotlights



Jenhya

Jenhya '20 is majoring in civil engineering and minoring in dance at Wayne State University in Detroit. "Clonlara prepared me for engineering because I got to discover how to create authentic, relevant, and personally challenging learning experiences," she says.

Marcos

Marcos '21 was a serious triathlete during his time with Clonlara. He is now studying to be a professional cryptocurrency investor. About studying at Clonlara, he says, "I most appreciated the opportunity I had to choose my own projects, to follow my talents, and to create my own schedule."



Pedro

Pedro '18 is pursuing filmmaking and acting, studying at the Confetti Institute of Creative Technologies and participating in the Actors Workshop Nottingham. "My favorite aspect of Clonlara was the freedom to learn the subjects I wanted while also developing my organizational skills," Pedro says.

A young girl with long blonde hair, wearing a pink cardigan, is smiling as she looks at a drawing in a binder. A woman with long blonde hair, wearing a white sweater, is leaning over the binder, looking at the drawing with her. The drawing is a sketch of a landscape with a tree and a path. The background is blurred, showing other people in a classroom setting.

OUR VISION

“

Clonlara is a small school with an incredibly large vision. The potential is enormous for us to make a significant contribution to field of education.

”

— Chandra Montgomery Nicol

a letter from our chairperson of the board

Dear Clonlara families and friends,

Those of you who have been with us a few years may remember when I served as the executive director. Much of my work was behind the scenes, but I tried to connect with parents and students as much as possible. Hearing your stories of learning and of overcoming obstacles was often the best part of my job. I especially liked being able to share this wisdom with other families, to ensure they had successful experiences, too.

For the past two years, I have been experiencing Clonlara from a new position: the board chairperson. I no longer have day-to-day job duties, so I can truly view our organization as a whole. I can also reflect more on the challenges Clonlara faced in the past, and how they have led to successes now. I thought perhaps there's something of interest for you in my story...

A major focus for me was creating a sustainable organization. For a nonprofit, finances are always crucial, but I knew that money was not the most important aspect of our work.

For Clonlara to endure, the culture of work among the employees had to match what the students experienced—trust, teamwork, flexibility, and generosity. I had my ideas and learned that there were some obstacles to defining and systematizing a culture. I had to be very intentional in describing it, in communicating it, and especially in living it.



Chandra Montgomery Nicol
Board Chairperson



I gathered a leadership team and we dedicated ourselves to practicing the culture and to using a system for setting priorities and keeping ourselves accountable to our other goals for sustainability and growth. By 2019, it was all paying off! We had a great team and solid plans that we were chipping away at quite well.

Then, as we all know, came Covid-19. Individually and collectively, every person in the world experienced disruption, difficulty, and distress—oftentimes intensely. Clonlara was no different. While our off-campus families and staff were comfortable learning and working at home, the stress of the pandemic still made many things difficult.

Our campus community was neither comfortable with nor ready for remote learning. They had very intentionally chosen to attend school in person. They were paying for the experience of private, personalized learning, but we were mandated to be closed. It was an almost impossible situation. Our teachers were doing an amazing job, but they were straining to learn how to create our Clonlara community online. Parents and students were stressed because it was such an unusual and changing situation.

When we opened again to students in late 2020, it was amid so many regulations and questions—about masks, vaccines, outbreaks, and more. It seemed like every day we had to consider new information and make new decisions.

At the same time, the Off-Campus Program was growing and requiring attention. This was welcome and wonderful, and it kept us in operation when so many schools and businesses were closing. But it came with many demands: for more staff, new ideas, and quick implementation. We needed to focus on the growth in homeschooling. It was then that I made the very difficult decision to close the campus school until the pandemic turmoil was over. It was one of the hardest decisions I have ever made.

The campus is the original Clonlara School—the school I attended as a child. It was the greatest dream of my mother, Pat Montgomery. None of us knew how long the campus closure would last, nor if any of the same students or teachers would return. I am incredibly relieved that we have been able to reopen our doors to campus students. We started small but are working to rebuild the momentum we had in 2019.

Since I retired, one hundred percent of the leadership team has remained to continue serving you and protecting the best of Clonlara—that's 100%! Additionally, the registrar, lead advisor, and a huge percentage of advisors and international directors have stayed with us. This is a humbling testament to how they have learned to work together. It is also a sign of Sofia's leadership skills. I am so proud of the dedicated staff that has kept the vision and culture alive.



What I see from my new perspective is a growing school that is ready to meet the new demands of education. Clonlara is a small school with an incredibly large vision. The potential is enormous for us to make a significant contribution to field of education. I think we are on the right track to do so.

Not everyone has been able to see what “education of the future” means. Many seem to want to go back to what they had before the pandemic; some even think going back to their own experience as children would be best. But gone is the need for content-based learning, since we have the content in our pockets now. Gone is the need for learning to be in one location; globalization is a catchphrase in almost all fields now. Education must give up these outdated practices. It is now imperative to equip learners with competencies such as problem-solving, collaboration, critical thinking, and communication. The rest of the world has only started to explore these, but they have been key components of Clonlara’s approach since 1967—I experienced them firsthand!

Clonlara continues to exemplify how a global, 21st century school actually works. I hope you have been able to experience our Celebrations of Learning, our Global Art Show, and our online clubs. We are preparing more innovations for our campus and off-campus families. From its beginning, Clonlara has ensured that learners can both personalize and participate in a caring community. I am pleased to be part of this continuing goal and delighted that you are, too!

Sincerely,

Chandra



Chandra Montgomery Nicol
Board Chairperson



our culture

Our “Culture of Trust” reflects who we are as an organization. Like a living organism, we need to embrace changes, adapt to circumstances, work in cooperation, and keep a healthy environment to grow “old” in an innovative way.

Aligning our culture with our core values contributes to a positive and healthy work environment at Clonlara. This contributes to our organization’s success.

CORE VALUES

Mission-driven	Our mission resonates with and inspires our people.
Teamwork	We work together toward our goals. We are respectful, helpful, communicative, and accountable to each other.
Adaptability & Agility	We require and value open-mindedness, readiness to innovate and problem-solve, and the ability to do these things quickly, when necessary.
Spirit of Generosity	Our people and policies show a willingness to give of their time, energy, experience, and resources to support Clonlara, each other, and our enrolled families.
Sustainability	We meet the needs of the present while considering resources and integrity for future needs. This includes protecting natural resources, finances, ethics, and academic integrity. As passionate, lifelong learners, our continued personal and professional growth benefits our students and our organization.
Joy	We take great delight in our work and in working together. It makes us happy to spark a love of learning in others: students, parents, each other, other educators, even strangers! We are grateful and enthusiastic about serving and educating.



milestones

1967	Clonlara School founded, and nursery school opens
1970	Elementary school opens
1974	6- to 13-year-olds served
1979	Launch of Clonlara School Home-Based Education program (HBEP; former name of the Off-Campus Program)
1982	Clonlara expanded to serve 14- to 18-year-olds
1985	Launch of Clonlara's Japanese Program
1985-1993	Clonlara, Inc v. State Board of Education court case: District Court; Court of Appeals; Michigan Supreme Court decision in Clonlara's favor, protecting the rights of home-educating families.
1997	New building opens in Ann Arbor
2003	Launch of Clonlara's Spanish Program
2004	Launch of Clonlara's German Program
2007	Affiliate program started in India



milestones

2013	Affiliate program started in Costa Rica; Launch of Clonlara's Hungarian Program
2015	Launch of Clonlara's Portuguese Program
2016	Capstone projects and endorsements introduced; Launch of Clonlara's French Program
2017	50th anniversary of Clonlara School
2018	Launch of Clonlara's Brazilian Program; Affiliate program started in Portugal
2020	Online clubs started; Launch of Clonlara's Latin American Program
2021	Family coaching sessions introduced; Clonlara Portugal Association constitution established
2022	Affiliate program started in Japan; Recognition process with Portuguese Ministry of Education started; New executive director, Sofia Gallis, appointed
2023	New affiliate programs started in Thailand, Portugal, and Bahamas



our future

To commit to our mission, within the next 10 years we want to expand to support 10,000 students per year across Clonlara's global network of programs, affiliates, and partners.

We will continue to target families and schools who are exploring new education options, are open to a personalized approach, are willing to invest, and are ready to work in partnership for their students' success.

Clonlara School Growth Strategy: A 3-Year Picture

Leverage Full Circle Learning:

We will launch our unique learning management system. The Clonlara App will be an innovative way for our families, students, and staff to work together and communicate.

Broaden market distribution:

We will identify at least one new partnership and affiliate school.

Train other educators:

We will train up to 50 mentors—a new concept being developed.

Build reputation as education authority:

Since 2020, our pedagogical team has worked to compile and protect our pedagogical approach. We conduct original research on education-related topics, and we are working on a teacher training program and a mentor training program to help spread our philosophy and methods.

Further develop Ann Arbor campus:

Our Ann Arbor campus will be our core, premiere model and be globally connected.

Increase geographic footprint:

We will open our second Campus in Idanha-a-Nova, Portugal. This will be our first campus outside of the United States. The school will be a multicultural environment for students from 1st to 12th grade, with bilingual learning and an innovative approach.

Across our programs and affiliates, we will support more than 3,000 students per year.

student spotlights

Jojo

“I love Clonlara! I have so much freedom with the courses I take—when I study, when I take a class. I have many auditions, and Clonlara provides me with the flexibility to balance my schedule.”

Jojo, U.S. Program



Gioia

“I have never before had such good support and felt so well understood, and I can wholeheartedly recommend Clonlara.”

Gioia, Spanish Program

OUR APPROACH

“

School cannot be a world apart. This school is fully integrated into our family.

”

— Carolina, Brazilian Program Parent



pedagogical principles

The freedom to live and grow and to focus on the individual needs, interests, and abilities of each child is the basis for the very existence of Clonlara School.

Learning happens all the time. Clonlara staff members do not labor under the misconception that schools have a premium on learning or that what a child learns at school is of greater value than what they learn at home or elsewhere.

The Child at the Center

Neuroscience tells us that each child has their own built-in developmental timetable; our experience tells us that each child also has their own preferred approach to learning. Our campus's low student-teacher ratio and small class sizes cater to individual learning styles and developmental timelines. Teachers get to know each student well; they know what the student has mastered and how to foster progress. In our Off-Campus Program, advisors work with students and families on a one-to-one basis.

The foundation of Clonlara School is personalized learning. We have developed our own Continuum of Competencies based on Michigan grade-level content expectations and Michigan merit high school graduation requirements; however, each student's learning is based on their unique interests, talents, styles, and goals.



framework for learning

Our work is based on well-established concepts from education and psychology along with various pedagogical approaches that place the child at the center of the learning process. These approaches see learning and development as interconnected, recognizing that the child's needs, interests, and abilities are valuable sources of information to guide their growth. The following theories and concepts inform Clonlara's philosophy of education:

Self-Determination Theory

Self-determination theory embraces the assumption that "all individuals have natural, innate, and constructive tendencies to progressively develop an ever more elaborated and unified sense of self" (Deci & Ryan, 2002). However, a certain environment is necessary. In the absence of a stimulating, trustful, and rich growing environment, a child will not benefit from the power of this innate drive. According to the theory, three individual needs must then be fulfilled: competence, relatedness, and autonomy.

Attachment Theory

Attachment theory emphasizes the importance of a strong, healthy relationship between a child and their parent, guardian, or teacher. This relationship becomes a trusting and safe place from which the child departs and returns when necessary, allowing for healthy social-emotional development. This theory is supported by the work of social scientists such as John Bowlby and Gordon Neufeld.

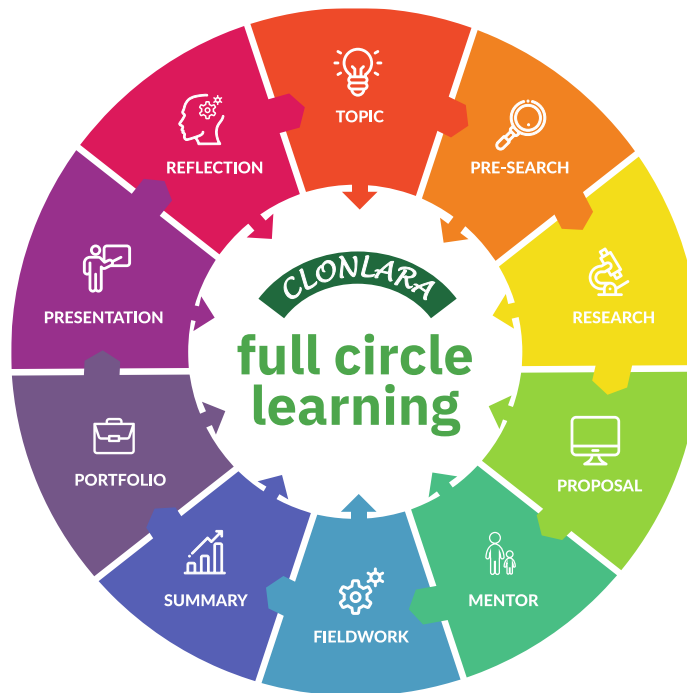
Personalized Learning

At Clonlara, personalized learning is a child-centered approach to education. It empowers the student to exercise agency in all aspects of learning, including choosing topics, goals, resources, and timelines. Personalized learning promotes self-advocacy skills and meaningful academic and personal growth in critical competencies. It occurs on a spectrum based on the needs and realities of each student and their family.

Full Circle Learning integrates the fundamentals of self-determination theory, attachment theory, and personalized learning.



full circle learning



Full Circle Learning (FCL) is Clonlara’s unique tool that allows students to fully personalize their learning. The 10 steps provide a way for students to plan, document, and reflect on their natural learning process, replacing the fixed curriculum, strict timetables, and formal testing of the traditional education system.

FCL is applicable at all age levels and for all students, regardless of learning preferences and differences. It doesn’t need to be a linear process; it is a flexible tool that should be used to meet the student’s needs as they grow and develop metacognitive skills.

6Cs

At Clonlara, we want our graduates to be joyful, lifelong learners well-prepared for future challenges. Our evaluation criteria focus on six competencies: Collaboration, Communication, Content, Critical Thinking, Creativity, and Confidence. We ask teachers and families to integrate these competencies into their course planning and projects, allowing students to continually assess their progress in these areas. By nurturing and assessing these skills in our students, we are confident that we are equipping them to actively engage and contribute in the 21st-century world.

Collaboration

We recognize that working with others can fuel our learning and build respect, social emotional skills, and a sense of community.



Critical thinking

We recognize that analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing information will help us form strong arguments and develop wisdom in our thinking.



Communication

We recognize that effective speaking, writing, and listening can foster empathy, connection, and understanding.



Creativity

We recognize the importance of creating new and different solutions to problems by inventing, hypothesizing, and exploring.



Content

We recognize that mastering academic content allows us to see connections, develop learning strategies, extend our learning, and follow our curiosities.



Confidence

We recognize that the willingness to try new things and learn from failures will help us develop grit and a growth mindset.



parent perspectives

“At Clonlara, learning is personalized, and everyone has a voice. The kids have core subjects intertwined throughout their day while also getting to explore their own personal interests. When they have an idea, they receive the support and encouragement they need to make it a reality. My kids truly get to be themselves!”

— Sarah, Ann Arbor Campus Parent



“I would like to congratulate the way in which the Clonlara team looks at the individuality of each child, helping families to see abilities and talents. For us, it is a great school model for the future. We just have to thank you for all the support we have always had.”

— Camila, Off-Campus Parent



“At Clonlara, education is a whole-family affair. The partnership between our children, us, and the staff is empowering and encouraging.”

— Abby, Ann Arbor Campus Parent



join us in a culture of giving



Your donations make a difference! Your gifts help us fulfill our mission and empower learners to participate purposely and eagerly in their own education.

[Donate Now](#)





“

Any person at any age can benefit from the freedom to learn in a way that involves them intimately in the process.

— Pat Montgomery, Clonlara School Founder

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