

EZ-CARE2™

CLIENT PROFILE

Columbus Montessori School Reduces Time Spent on Parent Tuition Billing by 90%

AT A GLANCE:

Organization:

Columbus Montessori
Education Center

Location:

Columbus, Ohio

Business Challenge:

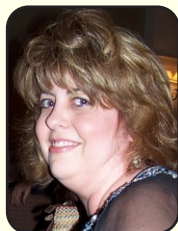
Spending too much time collecting and processing payments, and their initial solution using their bank to collect payments electronically required double entry of data.

Solution:

EZ-EFT automatic fee collection and **EZ-CARE2** center management software from SofterWare.

Key Results:

- Collecting 95% of Tuition (approximately \$100,000/month) electronically
- Time spent on family tuition billing cut by 90%
- No double entry – EFT payments are automatically posted to the family's ledgers.
- Improved understanding and management of outstanding A/R balances



Tiffany Harmon
Finance Manager

"We now spend less than an hour to do what used to take more than a whole day of someone's time!"

The Columbus Montessori Education Center (CMEC), established in 1984, is a nonprofit community organization whose mission is to be an excellent model of center based quality early learning. In 1994, they expanded to include accredited elementary and middle school programs. They now serve approximately 250 families with a wide blend of income levels. They also advocate access for all children, beginning at birth, to quality learning experiences, and offer programs for teachers, parents and others that support these goals.

Business Challenge:

Like many childcare providers, fee collection was a time-consuming hassle for Columbus Montessori. To help solve this challenge, they were attracted to the idea of automatic electronic fee collection using pre-authorized bank drafts. According to

Tiffany Harmon, the organization's Finance Manager, "The first year was really only a partial success because we had arranged to do the processing through our bank. It was a bit of a processing nightmare because it didn't integrate at all with our accounting, and there was a lot of double entry. We learned a lot and decided that to really achieve the efficiency we were looking for required a system that integrated enrollment, billing and electronic payment processing. Luckily we found SofterWare."

Solution:

SofterWare pioneered the use of automatic fee payment by childcare centers and school-age programs with the introduction of EZ-EFT, a module of SofterWare's EZ-CARE2 center management software. EZ-EFT integrates with EZ-CARE2's Accounts Receivable features, so

EZ-CARE²

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that an organization can enter a family's bank account or credit card information once, and then quickly and easily process preauthorized transactions to collect fees electronically when due. Since the amounts collected can be automatically adjusted to reflect fee & schedule changes, and the payments are posted to the ledgers automatically – there is no double entry required – which leads to dramatic administrative time savings!

Benefits:

According to Tiffany, "We really appreciate the flexibility that EZ-CARE2 provides, since it allows us to accommodate most of our quirky rates and policies. We now collect 95% of our tuition, which can run \$100,000 each month, automatically on the day they are due. Most importantly, there is now no double entry since the electronic payments are automatically posted to the family's ledgers. We now spend less than an hour to do what used take more than a whole day of someone's time! Another reason we switched

over was so we could have a better understanding of outstanding A/R balances – this was extremely confusing with our old system. EZ-EFT is just great – it's the answer to our dreams!"

Columbus Montessori also decided to make electronic payments the required method of payment. Said Tiffany, "The majority of our families had no problem with the idea of electronic transactions, but a few certainly had concerns. We worked hard educating our parents to understand that it was actually safer and gave them better protection than checks. We also listened to their issues. For instance, we now allow parents to choose if they want their tuition collected on the 1st or 15th of the month, which helped increase acceptance and participation. We also offer families who prefer it the option of prepaying their entire year's tuition in return for a 3% discount. We've made a few exceptions where we needed, but for the most part, time spent processing tuition checks is a thing of the past."

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*Tiffany Harmon, Finance Manager
Columbus Montessori Education Center*