



Our Mother of Sorrows
Catholic School

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Engaged learners walking with Christ

Our Mother of Sorrows Catholic School State of the School Spring 2009

This document, written by the school's administrator and reviewed by the pastor and a committee of School Board members and faculty, represents both the current status of the school, as well as a synopsis of its strategic plan for the next few years. Its intended use is to communicate to all in our community both the strengths and growth opportunities of Our Mother of Sorrows Catholic School.

Strategic Plan

The school's strategic plan, developed by the administrator, pastor, school board, and a group of teachers, can be divided into five major components: Curriculum, Marketing, Development, Facilities, and Administration. Each is discussed below.

Curriculum

The school is committed to retaining its strong Catholic school identity through continued catechesis of its faculty and staff, nearly all of whom have attained their religious education certification, and to identify opportunities to further the growth of faith formation within our school community. One of the ways our Catholic school identity is put into practice on a daily basis is through our Student Learning Expectations, which can be summed up by the new school motto of "*Engaged learners walking with Christ.*"

The school delivers a strong curriculum-based education to its students, derived from diocesan, state and national standards. Evidence to the success of the school's curriculum can be seen by the results of AIMS testing, as well as the ACRE (Assessment of Catechesis Religious Education) tests. The school is accredited by the Western Catholic Education Association, and is one of only a few schools in the diocese accredited by the North Central Association, which requires a thorough review of the school's curriculum and certification of the school's faculty. It should be mentioned that most public elementary and middle schools lack any accreditation by an outside agency.

A recent initiative to strengthen the school's curriculum across all grades was to institutionalize regular meetings on curriculum. Starting with math, and now including language arts, teachers meet throughout the year to determine how curriculum goals and expectations are being met. Specifically, areas of curriculum are being identified where mastery must occur in a particular grade so academic success can be built upon that knowledge in subsequent grades. Often this involves not only what and when a particular concept is taught, but how it is taught.

Other areas of commitment to the curriculum include teachers receiving meaningful professional development opportunities, and maintaining student support services, specifically through the school's Resource Center. The school's teachers, with the exception of one part-time ancillary teacher, all have Arizona State Certification, and by the end of the summer 2009 three teachers will have attained the Fellowship from the Southern Arizona Writing Project, sponsored by the University of Arizona. Six teachers have been trained and have become mentors in differentiated instruction techniques. These techniques provides for teaching and learning to account for different students' knowledge, readiness, preferences, and abilities.

Marketing

The school's budget, and the resulting richness of curriculum it's able to deliver, is based in large part to the number of students enrolled in the school. The school's strategic plan recognizes the need to attract new students, as well as to ensure a positive image of the school in the Tucson community. Although part of the equation simply relies on getting the word out on the school's many successes, in other respects it involves being more proactive in disseminating the message to potential families in the eastern parts of Tucson. To that end, the school is committed to an aggressive marketing plan, constrained only by available funds, to attract new students and to creating a positive image through direct mail, its web page, targeted advertisements, and in improving its partnership with other eastside parishes.

Development

As part of the school's desire to lessen its dependency on tuition as a means for financial support, the strategic plan sets to put in motion initiatives to increase its alumni network and search for grant monies.

Plans to develop the alumni network have begun in earnest to capitalize on the school's upcoming 50th anniversary. Although the current economic downturn, and resulting stock market decline, has certainly affected the school's ability to access corporate grants and philanthropic endowment funds, the school will continue to identify funding sources and to match them against needs, such as further improving the school's already strong technology programs.

Facilities

The school's facilities are well-maintained and in good repair. However, there are two major areas of focus that are addressed in the school strategic plan: air conditioning and playground equipment.

The means to address both these needs is intended to come from the recent diocesan "*Our Faith, Our Hope, Our Future*" capital campaign. As part of that campaign, the parish raised over \$1.3 million dollars, with over \$300,000 of that amount being returned to the parish for local needs. The parish pastoral staff and lay leadership committed to most of that money, almost a quarter of a million dollars, to be used for air conditioning for the school, with the remainder to upgrade the parish hall. Subsequent to the campaign, an anonymous donor stepped forward and gave the parish another \$100,000, which was split evenly between the air conditioning fund and the parish hall upgrade. It should be noted that any upgrade to the parish hall will certainly benefit the school as it uses the facility for its lunch room and for many school events.

As nearly all the money in the capital campaign was given by donors over a period of five years, the air conditioning project cannot occur in one short burst. Also, based upon contractor estimates provided last year, the cost of the air conditioning project exceeds the amount committed (but not yet collected) by over \$150,000. Obviously, a plan to raise those funds will need to be put in place over the next 18 months.

Also part of the diocesan capital campaign was to provide the diocesan office of Catholic Schools with money to distribute to schools for local projects. Once again, that money will not be made available to schools until most, if not all, of the funds committed by donors is actually received, and the diocesan office determines a way for schools to request that grant money. However, once that process is determined, the school intends to apply to use those funds for playground equipment to augment the school's current skills center, currently used only by Preschool -2nd grade students.

Administration

The last area of the strategic plan is to select key players to assist the school's administrator in achieving the school's objectives. Specifically, the school will use the talents of all those in its community - teachers, parents, pastoral staff - to work within the structures of faculty, board, and staff meetings to drive our goals to fruition.

Submitted by:



Dave Keller
Principal
February 12, 2009

Our Mother of Sorrows Students are...

Active Christians ◇ *Active Community Builders* ◇ *Engaged Learners* ◇ *Responsible Global Citizens*