

August 18, 2013

Dear Mary Queen of Peace School Parents and Parishioners,

The Mary Queen of Peace School Board of Education would like to thank you for participating in our Spring 2013 school survey. We were pleased with the strong response rate and the support for the school that exists in the parish. As with any survey, it is important to analyze responses and comments to determine trends concerning strengths and areas of concern. The results tell us that we are a strong, faith-based school with a long history of graduating successful students. There were areas of concern, however, that can be addressed to ensure the continuation of quality Catholic Education in Mary Queen of Peace Parish. The three topics discussed below represent the areas of concern expressed in the survey responses, which the Board of Education and school administration have deemed are of primary importance and will address.

**Enrollment:** Our parish data indicates that our “capture rate” of baptized children (percentage of eligible children) who begin school at Mary Queen of Peace remains steady. But due to the declining birth rate and a smaller number of children being baptized, we are experiencing reduced enrollment. There are also a number of students who leave Mary Queen of Peace School for a number of reasons, most often at the middle school level. Although our current and predicted future enrollment will allow us to remain a vibrant and viable school for many years, we are taking the following steps to ensure our enrollment rate is as healthy as possible.

- Opening a preschool program this year which can lead to earlier engagement for young parishioners
- Improving the school environment, especially in the middle school (newly focused 5-6 and 7-8 teaching teams, better student-centered communication, etc.)
- Creating an Enrollment Management and Marketing Team to evaluate and improve upon marketing and enrollment issues
- Inviting parents who withdraw their children to complete a detailed exit survey to be used as an ongoing assessment of the school environment and curriculum
- Continuing to utilize Home and School Board new family/buddy programs to create a welcoming environment for the children and families who are new to the school...(contacting new parents, get-togethers, yard signs, mentors, etc.)

**Academics:** On the positive side: nearly 100% of students graduating from Mary Queen of Peace School are accepted into and succeed in their first-choice high schools. Also, the

majority of our students score very well on standardized tests (the IOWA Assessments). A concern is that grades 4-7 each fell below Archdiocesan averages in one math subtest. To address this concern and meet the increasing demands of twenty-first century education there are several ways we will meet these challenges.

- Survey recent graduates about their preparedness for high school coursework
- Continue implementation of the Mastering Math Facts/Rocket Math program to improve math calculation
- Evaluate new math texts from publishers which are better aligned with new Common Core State Standards and new assessments; adopt new series for 2014-2015
- Incorporate updated math workbooks and resources into instruction
- Increase faculty professional development and implementation of Common Core State Standards and twenty-first century education requirements
- Increase opportunities for academic-oriented extra-curricular activities

Discipline: There is continued concern about discipline and bullying issues, both in and out of school. We believe our Catholic faith should be a guide for us in this area. Mary Queen of Peace School is entering its second year of the Virtue Based Restorative Discipline Program (VBRD) recommended by the Archdiocese which offers teachers, parents, students, and schools, a way to cultivate Christian behaviors in our children while aspiring to repair any harm done to a child due to bullying or other hurtful behaviors. The guiding purpose for the Virtue Based Restorative Discipline can be found in scripture:

Colossians 3:12-15

*12 So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. 14 Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. 15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.*

The teachers and administration will incorporate the principles of the VBRD program in several ways:

- Instruction for students centered around learning about virtues
- Classroom meetings and small-group discussions to address classroom issues and develop a safe and supportive classroom environment
- Implementation of conflict resolution strategies that incorporate a call to virtue and encourage personal growth
- Disciplinary actions that combine traditional consequences with restorative practices
- Continued education and opportunities for parents to learn about and practice VBRD in their own lives

In addition to the school-wide Virtue Based Restorative Discipline Program, primary teachers have in place classroom rules and a progressive behavior system to encourage appropriate behavior. In grades 5-8, behavior cards, carried by each child, are marked for minor rule infractions. When a student receives 5 marks on his/her card or commits a more serious infraction, after-school detention results. For serious issues, a child may also be referred to the principal for administrative and parental involvement. Discipline may include both traditional consequences such as detention or suspension and restorative consequences following the VBRD program philosophy. Extreme situations may lead to withdrawal for cause. We are pleased to have Mrs. Nicole Flaar, school social worker, join us in a full-time capacity this year. Her work with individuals, small groups, and classes will often focus on behavior management and self-control issues.

It is in the best interest of the entire community to ensure the long-term success of Mary Queen of Peace School, so we thank you again for your participation in our survey and your commitment to improving our school. Communication between all school and parish constituents will be an ongoing priority for the Board of Education; we ask that you watch parish and school communications for upcoming news and information. Please continue to support our work with your prayers and feedback.

Sincerely,  
Fr. Bob Reiker, Pastor  
Mrs. Amy Schroff, Principal  
Mrs. Heidi Sallee, Past BOE President  
Mrs. Linda Schoemehl, Incoming BOE President  
Mary Queen of Peace School Board of Education