St. Mary’s Parish Council AGM Meeting 2 March 2014

Principal’s Report

At the commencement of 2013 there were 540 students enrolled with 370 families.

Our school theme was "Listen For God's Voice". This theme set the tone for all that happened within our school community. This extended to action taken by our Yr. 6 students where they organised a Cyclethon which raised $22,000. Of this, $17,000 was donated to assist one of our families and $5000 went to the Golden Age Foundation to assist the work of Russell Dickson in Uganda. Our School theme for 2014 is "Be People of God."

As an outcome of Principals visiting schools and educational institutions in Singapore and Vietnam as a component of the North Eastern Principals’ Conference, St. Mary’s, along with the other schools in the North Eastern Zone of Melbourne, will be sponsoring a teacher each year to assist the work of a school that caters for deaf students in Ho Chi Minh city. This was another example of our school theme became a lived reality.

Building
Work in relation to the second stage of our Building Project was completed in Term 3. The Administration building became operational, the Discovery Centre was opened for all students and the Prep-Yr. 2 students moved into their refurbished spaces. This building has now been named the Frayne Learning Centre. The car park was completed just prior to the end of the 2013 school year. The Parish Offices are not yet operational as it is necessary to convert our phones over to optic fibre and current lines will then be used by Parish staff. This should be completed on 5 March 2014.

The staff is extremely grateful for all the support given by parents and especially the MAD Team who did amazing work throughout this Building Project in moving classes and resources as needed.
Projects and Programs 2013

CHANGE 2 Project
In 2013, St. Mary's school participated in the Change2 Project. Through this project, seven teachers were trained and commissioned to investigate and execute a change within the whole School Improvement Plan. This project is sponsored by the Principal and the Change2 Team report back to a Steering Committee comprising the Principal, a staff representative, two parent and two student representatives. The focus for St. Mary's "change" was "To engage students in their learning through the support of parents and teachers." This goal is being actioned through the implementation of Learning Intentions with a focus on the use of success criteria. The members of the Change2 Team are now leading aspects of staff professional learning and two members are sitting on the Leadership and Management Team. Due to the success of our Team, four members have been trained as Change2 facilitators and will be assisting other schools to implement the Change2 process in their schools.

Selection as an ICON Research School
St. Mary's was selected to be an ICON Research School. ICON stands for Integrated Catholic Online Network. Along with five other schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, our teachers will be involved in research using "design thinking" techniques to investigate powerful approaches to learning and teaching. Findings will be shared with the broader community. Through this project, we will integrate the use of Google Apps and other technologies to enable higher expectations for the modern learner to engage in the contemporary world. This will be a demanding Project, one where our learning will be taken further and the outcomes will support the learning of our students and those across the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

Contemporary Learning Project
Throughout 2013 as a component of the Contemporary Learning Project we focused on personalized learning to support our School Improvement goal "To build and implement contemporary pedagogy and practices to maximize student learning and engagement" St. Mary's participated in professional learning through this personalized learning stream. At St. Mary's we believe that student engagement is crucial to achieving optimal learning outcomes for our students, thus we have utilized approaches to engage the learner through action based inquiry learning, incorporating student voice in determining focus for learning, the setting of individual learning goals and providing personalized feedback.

Learning Assessment Project
The LAP Project is a Catholic Education Office Melbourne and Melbourne University initiative. It is a whole school approach to using evidence to inform effective teaching and learning practices.
Collaborative Literacy Learning Communities Project
The CLLC Project aims to improve the learning outcomes for middle year students (5-8). Drawing on an inquiry approach to learning and teaching, it uses evidence and assessment to guide learning processes. In 2013 through this Project, Yr. 5 and 6 teachers participated in a professional inquiry based around the effectiveness of modelled Writing in the classroom. Their work was presented at a Symposium at the Catholic Leadership Centre in December.

P-8 Writing Project
The P-8 Writing Project sets forth a contemporary model of professional learning for Literacy Leaders and Teams. It is designed to support differentiated ways to build knowledge, skills and understandings. It is focused on particular needs in Writing (creating and producing texts). Our Prep - Yr. 2 teachers again participated in this Project in 2013. Their professional inquiry centered on the use of data to inform personalized learning. The Tipperley model was used as a framework for their inquiry.

Student Programs/Activities

Fire Carrier Program
“Fire Carriers,” an acronym for “Friends Igniting Reconciliation through Education,” is an initiative through the Catholic Aboriginal Ministry of Victoria. The program aims to bring Peace, Justice and Reconciliation in dealing with the past, so as to build respect, appreciation and understanding of the original custodians of this land. Some members of staff have been inducted as Fire Carriers and each year a group of students are inducted as Fire Carriers and are commissioned with the responsibility of bringing to life the ideals of this program. In 2013, two teachers joined other teachers from the North Eastern Zone of Melbourne on a spiritual visit to Lake Mungo - an aboriginal sacred place.

Mathematics Competition
Eight Yr. 5 and 6 students participated in the inaugural Maths 24 tournament. Ten schools participated from the North Eastern Zone. St. Mary's came fourth in this Mathematics Competition.

Art Show
Our Biennial Art Show was held in August where students' artistic works were on display over two nights. Funds raised were donated to the Open Doors Foundation.

Sport
Boys 10 Yr. Old, 11 Yr. Old and 12 Yr. Old Relay Teams reached the State Relay Competition. The 11 Yr. Old Team made the Finals
Yr. 5/6 Girls played in the Billy Slater Shield State Finals
Yr. 6 AFL9's won the Gala Day Championship
Yr. 6 Mixed Netball Team were the District Champions
School Development in the Five Spheres of Schooling actioned from the School Improvement Plan

1. Religious Education
   • School motto was based on the Gospel and a Gospel Value was implemented each Term
   • Developed planning processes linking R.E. and Inquiry using contemporary pedagogy including student voice
   • Developed the use of student self-assessment and feedback strategies
   • Opportunities were offered for staff to explore different forms of prayer

2. Teaching and Learning
   • Goal setting and three way meetings - student/parent/teacher were conducted in Semester One and Semester Two
   • Developed a whole school approach to differentiated curriculum including ILPs, engagement through IT, thinking strategies, student voice, negotiated choice, self-evaluation and self-regulated learning
   • Personalized learning strategies were extended and included the use of learning journals
   • A variety of approaches were utilized in the Inquiry approach to learning including action inquiry, shared inquiry and student lead inquiry. Workshops were facilitated by Jenni Wilson
   • Learning intentions utilized in all classrooms
   • Embedded AusVELS as a basis for teaching and learning
   • Developed consistent practice in documentation
   • Reviewed and developed Literacy Curriculum with a particular focus on oral language

3. Student Wellbeing
   • Cyber safety Parent Evening was conducted by ACMA. It was a very informative evening with approximately 80 parents in attendance.
   • Family Life Program (Human Development) was conducted for students in Yr. 5 and 6
   • St Mary's was awarded a grant of $5000 from Bullystoppers which is awarded through the Student Inclusion and Engagement Division - Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. The grant is being used to work with the students on bystander behaviour and to develop an efficient way to track student behaviour, initially on the playground, to praise positives and intervene if patterns of negative behaviour are emerging. Appropriate curriculum content and a record keeping system are being developed through this grant.
4. Leadership and Management
   • Learning Walks were implemented to gain knowledge and understanding and appreciation of work happening in classrooms. Feedback was given to support growth in practice.
   • Literacy Leaders undertook Leadership training
   • Seven teachers trained through the CHANGE 2 Program and three undertook training as CHANGE2 facilitators.
   • Growth Coaching was undertaken by two members of the Leadership Team
   • Principal and Director of Teaching Learning participated in the Personalized Learning Program.
   • Building Project was completed and facilities were occupied.

5. Community
   • Helen Sadler worked with the School Advisory Board to explore and develop a consistent understanding of "Parent Engagement."
   • Surveys were conducted with parents and students to gauge needs and ideas in regards to playground improvements and engagement.
   • School Advisory Board focused on Parent Engagement. Surveys were conducted with parents and students to gain feedback on parents’ understanding and experiences of engagement in their child’s learning and also on what parents and students wanted in relation to Grounds Improvement. As an outcome from the Parent Engagement Survey, the Schoolbag app was introduced to improve communication with parents. It is a free app for parents and can be easily up-dated. It is very flexible, allowing schools to create their own customised content and provides a great alternative to school SMS alerts by using Free Push Alert Notifications directly to parent smartphones. Skoolbag is an iPhone and Android based School communication App that delivers School notices and information directly to parents' mobile phones.
   • The SAB has formed two sub committees to continue its work on Parent Engagement and to develop a concept plan for the development of the playground.
   • Participation and support in the life of the school has continued to be a focus of the work of the Parents ’Association. The PA provided $60,000 which enabled the purchase of Interactive Boards for our re-furbished buildings. The PA continued to run the Tuck-shop and Uniform shop, supported special days of celebration, retreat days and conducted special activities for the students and families.
   • The Maintenance and Development Team have provided ongoing and committed support especially as last year there were many extra calls for their assistance as we managed our building program. Due to the support of the MAD Team, and other parent and parishioner volunteers, we were able to move classes and resources as each stage of our Building Project was completed. This was a big effort that was very much appreciated by
staff and students. It is estimated that the work of the MAD Team last year, supported by parents and parishioners, saved our community $150,000.

Professional Development Days

• Spirituality- Meditation
• Inquiry Learning- facilitated by Jenni Wilson
• World Religions and Technology - an Interfaith Experience
• Assessment and Reporting

Goals set for the next two year period are as follows:

EDUCATION IN FAITH
• To provide a Catholic environment that integrates faith, life and culture

LEARNING AND TEACHING
• To build and implement contemporary pedagogy and practices to maximize student learning and engagement

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT
• To develop and embed a consistent contemporary learning and teaching culture

STUDENT WELLBEING
• To maximize student wellbeing, engagement and connectedness to school and their learning

COMMUNITY
• To build family and community partnerships which support student learning and engagement

Helen Anderson
PRINCIPAL

28 February 2014