

Community AGM 2015 Principal's Report

As I said last year, I feel very lucky and privileged to be a part of such a wonderful school and community. At St Mary's we are very fortunate to have a close community who work together for the betterment of our school. The students are well mannered, well-behaved and are always willing to help each other when they are needed.

Tonight I will be presenting my second annual Report on our great school. In this report to the community I will be highlighting a selection of areas that I consider vital to our ongoing improvement and growth in accordance to the Catholic Education Strategic Direction which catch phrase is LEAD – Learning, Engagement, Accountability and Discipleship. I will be highlighting a wide range of items which we should celebrate and will be outlining the school's direction into the future.

LEARNING

When it comes to learning St Mary's is committed to enhancing student achievement and wellbeing. The staff are dedicated to using best practise in their teaching and are constantly learning and developing the Science and Art of the teaching profession. As a whole staff we have further developed our understanding and implementation of explicit teaching of Grammar and Punctuation, conducting balanced Numeracy and Literacy lessons and further developed skills in the art of tracking and analysing student data.

By continually learning and becoming better teachers we continue to strive to achieve better educational outcomes for our students. In addition to this whole school focus teachers have also further reviewed their own individual practises using the ATSIL National Teaching Standards and attended several Professional Learning days to further their competencies.

The staff have spent time reviewing school data and there is plenty of information to get through such as:

- NAPLAN

- Standardised Tests
- Bishops RE Assessment
- Quality Catholic Schools Self Audit (QCS)
- Evangelisation Plan
- Early Years Literacy and Numeracy Data
- PIPS Testing (Pre-primary)

When reviewing the data the staff identify and celebrate the wonderful things that are occurring in our school. We also set goals for the areas of improvement. Under the Learning umbrella this year our goals were focused on improving our NAPLAN results in Grammar and Punctuation and improving the students reading results.

In order to achieve these goals several initiatives were introduced:

1. Firstly we introduced the Reading Recovery program. Mrs Riethmuller was charged with learning and implementing this program with the Year 1 students. I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation of Mrs Riethmuller's commitment and determination to see this program succeed. The Year 1 students who were selected, based on data, made exceptional progress in reading and writing. In some cases coming into the program at Reading Recovery Level 0 and exiting at Level 16, which is a huge achievement. I am proud to say that this program will continue in 2016 and many more students will benefit from Mrs Riethmuller's tutelage.
2. We also increased the support time in Years 3-6 from previous years. Thank you to Mrs Jefferys and Mrs Cooper for their work in conducting the Alpha to Omega Program and supporting students in the classroom. In 2016 Mrs Cooper will continue to support students in the classrooms.
3. Other initiatives that were implemented this year across the school were the IT programs such as Mathletics, Readings Eggs and the Lexile Program. These programs have had very positive feedback from parents, students and staff. These programs have increased student motivation and engagement and make it easier for staff to track student progress. We look forward to seeing how these are further used in 2016.

Considering all of these initiatives I would now like to comment on some of the data and improvements:

Reading Levels

When it comes to reading levels we have achieved sound results across the school and continue to make improvements. From Pre-primary to Year 2 66% of students achieved well above or at our achievement goals while the Years 3-6 achieved 60%. We will continue to focus on Reading Comprehension in 2016 as a focus to improve these outcomes.

(powerpoint)

NAPLAN

The focus was on Grammar and Punctuation and the goal was for 85% of the Year 3 and Year 5 students to achieve above the National Standard. I am happy to report we achieved this goal with 94% of Year 3s achieving above the National Standard and 92% in Year 5.

Overall our NAPLAN results improved across the board with special mention of our Year 5s who achieved better results than other Catholic Like Schools.

Standardised Testing

Stanine 5 is what is expected from each year level in each Learning Area.

Taking into account this data and professional discussions with staff St Mary's will continue to have a focus on Reading Comprehension, Spelling and Mathematics in 2016.

ENGAGEMENT

In 2015 one of the main goals for St Mary's in the area of Engagement was to develop a sense of community that goes beyond the classroom walls. To do this the school reached out to the wider community to establish new partnerships.

Several partnerships were established over 2015. Firstly Two Dogs have been fantastic with their support of our Kindy Veggie garden, providing information, talks and advice on how to maintain our garden. The produce this year was amazing and I am sure the Kindy parents and staff enjoyed the fresh fruit and veg.

St Mary's also established a partnership with Collgar Windfarm. When Collgar heard about our new classroom they were more than happy to provide over \$20,000 for the IT component of our new classroom. I would personally like to thank Gemma from Collgar for helping establish this partnership for the betterment of our students. This kind donation by Collgar has allowed our students to have more opportunity to use IT within the curriculum.

St Mary's also made a stronger partnership with the Merredin Shire. I would like to thank Marilyn Sayers for all her work in establishing this partnership. The 'Adopt a Park' project has now been established and works on the park across the road will commence early in the New Year, dependent on funding. The students from Year 4/5 helped design the park and we all can't wait to see the final product. Once the park is established St Mary's students will help maintain and look after the Park, improving our commitment to community service. I would like to thank Mrs Sonya McCormack for leading this initiative and integrating this project into the curriculum.

St Mary's also enjoys a strong partnership with Cummins Theatre. Throughout the year we have been fortunate to be able to participate in various theatre workshops free of charge. The students have worked alongside international artists learning many new tricks and performing arts skills which inevitably brought the wider community together, including holiday programs.

Further to building wider partnerships we also continued to achieve our aim of promoting and encouraging parents to be involved in their child's learning and to continue to build community. St Mary's in collaboration with the School Board, P&F and St Mary's Parish organised many activities this year such as:

- Beginning of year Welcome BBQ
- Numerous Sacramental parent information nights
- Sacramental Commitment Masses
- Mother's Day morning tea and Father's Day breakfast
- Open Day and morning tea

- Grandparents morning tea
- Parent Information Evening
- Parent interviews
- Numerous sporting events throughout the year
- And who could forget our wonderful School Fun Day and Golf Ball Drop
- We are also looking forward to our End of Year Concert.

This year the P&F also had a school goal and that was to raise \$7,500. Well you can imagine that this goal was absolutely smashed with the P&F this year donating \$30,000 to St Mary's School.

These funds have been dedicated to the purchase of further IT equipment, Reading Books across the school in the form of Take Home Readers and Guided Reading texts as well as Lexile books for our library. Our Religious education resources were also improved.

I would like to thank the members of the School Board and P&F for continuing to work hard, giving their time and making decisions for the betterment of our students and our school. Thank you to all parents who also helped the P&F in numerous ways to help raise those amounts of funds - it is amazing.

ACCOUNTABILITY

This area focuses on the belief that our school has a personal and collective responsibility for our system's success. To improve our system we, as a school, need to maintain a physical environment that is safe, welcoming and comfortable for all community members, especially the students.

I would like to publically acknowledge the wonderful work that our Groundsman, Kevin Southcott continued to do this year until his retirement in July. Kev worked extremely hard and went above and beyond to make our school a welcoming and beautiful place to be. It was sad for all of us to see him go. We were then lucky enough to employ

Danny Smith who continued Kev's great work at keeping St Mary's looking terrific and I would like to thank him for his efforts also.

In addition to this I would also like to thank the school cleaners Ruth and Richelle for continuing to do a great job of ensuring our facilities are kept neat, clean and tidy, even those children's toilets which sometimes produces some very interesting stories.

To the staff

The staff have demonstrated great commitment in their roles this year and all are focused on providing opportunities for our students to help them reach their full potential. Often what makes the difference in students' progress and performance is the relationship that the students have with their teachers and how much they feel they belong at school. At St Mary's every child is valued and all staff go out of their way to create classrooms and environments that are welcoming and comforting for your children whilst also providing many challenging and stimulating learning experiences. Thank you to the staff for your continuous and great commitment throughout the year.

I would like to also take this opportunity to acknowledge our very professional and dedicated School Board who meet twice a term to ensure that the financial health of our school equals the achievements of our students. The board at all times focuses on what are the best outcomes for our school and in particular how we can best provide a facility that serves the needs and development of the children in our community.

I have enjoyed working together with both the School Board and P&F this year and I especially like to thank Yvonne and Shay for their dedication in leading these parent bodies and meeting with me on numerous occasions throughout the year. I look forward to working with some new faces in 2016.

DISCIPLESHIP

Bishops Test

In 2014 the school was significantly below the mean for Catholic Schools in WA. The staff have focused this year on Bible stories to increase the knowledge of our students.

The results for 2015 were dramatically improved with our school now in line with the mean for Catholic Schools. In addition to teaching the mandatory Religious Education units of work the students were also involved in many activities of Catechesis such as Re-enactments for Holy Week, Liturgies, School and weekend Masses, Prayer and Christian Service.

Discipleship ensures that our community have opportunities for personal faith development and we are all committed to deepening our relationship with Jesus.

Faith experience and educational excellence are central to our school's vision but also balanced by the opportunity to grow as a whole person and to become a lifelong learner. This year children have celebrated the Sacraments of Reconciliation, the Eucharist and Confirmation and participated in school retreats and class or school liturgies for which we thank Father Zyga, and Sister Leonie. Additionally the children and families have been involved in the weekend Mass readings, parent information evenings and a number of other faith development opportunities this year. I would also like to further thank Father Zyga who meets with students at least once per term to strengthen our relationship with the parish but also to get to know the students on a personal level and assist them with their Religious Education and faith journey.

Staff development and faith formation has continued to be a focus of our school life. In 2015 the staff attended a Spiritual Retreat in New Norcia which was run by the Marist Brothers. It was a great opportunity for staff to learn further about the importance of prayer in our personal lives. Staff also had time to reflect on their own faith journey and further develop their relationships with their colleagues.

It is also vitally important as Disciples of Christ that we ensure our students understand and demonstrate their commitment and involvement in community and social justice activities. One major initiative that was introduced in 2015 was the Ministries, RE, Special Events and Sports Ministries. These Ministries have enabled all Year 6 students to develop further leadership and service skills for our school and beyond. In 2016 we will also officially launch the Environmental Ministry.

More examples of how we have demonstrated our commitment to Social Justice in 2015 are:

- Project Compassion
- Life Link
- Staff Christian service
- Annual food drive for Merredin's Churches Fraternal
- Catholic Missions Project – raising money to purchase a water well for the children in Madagascar.

From 2016 St Mary's will become a single stream school and there will be many benefits of this occurring. We are lucky enough to have been able to secure funding for our new classroom which I am looking forward to seeing when it arrives later this year. I look forward to embracing 21st century learning and technology with the aim of equipping students with 21st century skills such as creativity, innovation, critical thinking, communication and collaboration.

As my report draws to an end I would like to acknowledge the work and dedication of those staff who will be leaving St Mary's at the conclusion of 2015.

Rosa – thank you for teaching Italian at St Mary's, great discussions in the staffroom and also out of school cheering on that fantastic basketball team.

Amy – thank you teaching the PP students for the last 3 years. Your bubbly personality and infectious laugh and sense of humour will be greatly missed.

Alyce – thank you for teaching the Year 2 and 3 over the last 3 and a half years. You have been a fantastic teacher who is professional and always willing to learn and take on new things. The whole community will miss you greatly.

Sheridan – enjoy the time off and we will welcome you back with open arms in 2017.

Matt – teaching History/Year 3/4 class and for being a fantastic male role model for the students – I will sorely miss having another male teacher around the school.

Thank you to the school's administrative staff, Teresa and Lorraine. If we didn't have you doing what you do the school wouldn't function and I would not be half as organised as I am today.

I would also like to thank Father Zyga, Pauline and Zoe for their continual support within the leadership team – your advice and assistance have been an enormous strength and for this I thank you all. Although some of our Leadership Meetings have been quite long we have worked well together to solve some interesting issues and further develop the school and the community.

Thank you to all parents and Parish members who have contributed in any way to the continual improvement of our school and the betterment of our children.

Finally to the wonderful students. I would like to thank them for trying their best to reach their full potential, being children who are amazing, thoughtful, love coming to school and putting a smile on everyone's faces every day and continuing to do ordinary things extraordinarily well.

I would now like to announce the staffing for 2016.

I thank you and wish you a very safe and holy Christmas.