

Community AGM 2014 Principal's Report

Tonight I will be presenting my first annual Report on our great school. It will be a little tricky as I missed some of the fantastic work which occurred in the first half of the year and I would like to congratulate and thank Mark Marando on doing such a wonderful job before me.

I have already mentioned throughout the last 6 months that 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 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.

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 Kagan's Cooperative Learning Strategies, Bloom's Taxonomy of questioning and the PLD Literacy Strategies. 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 the last term reviewing school data and there is plenty of information to get through such as:

- NAPLAN

- Standardised Tests in comprehension, spelling, vocabulary, mathematics and reading
- Bishops RE Assessment
- Quality Catholic Schools Self Audit (QCS)
- School Climate Survey
- 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. Although some of the standardised test results and NAPLAN were not too flattering this year the QCS Audit and School Climate Survey had many items to celebrate and indicate that as a whole school we are achieving many goals.

After considering these results there is a need in 2015 for St Mary's School to have a focus on Literacy. To help boost our student outcomes in these areas a number of significant initiatives will be taking place and have been approved by the School Board:

1. Firstly we will be introducing the Reading Recovery program. This program is strongly encouraged by the Catholic Education Office as schools who have the program have had significant improvements in reading. It aims to reduce the number of children experiencing literacy difficulties through the provision of a high-quality, intensive early literacy intervention. The children are tutored to become successful literacy learners in 12 – 20 weeks of daily, one-to-one lessons that supplement effective classroom instruction. The program targets students in Year 1 and 2.
2. St Mary's will also increase the support time students in Years 3-6 who are struggling receive. At present the majority of students who receive Literacy support have 25 minutes weekly. This will be increased to 30 minutes per day, four days a week. This support program will also target 30 minutes per day, four days a week for Numeracy support.

3. The other initiatives which will continue in 2015 across the school are the IT programs which have been trialled this term. Athletics and Readings Eggs and Reading Express have had very positive feedback from parents, students and staff. These programs have increased student motivation and engagement and we look forward to seeing how these are further used in 2015.

Bishops Test

In the Bishop's Religious Education Test the school was significantly below the mean for Catholic Schools in WA. The staff have analysed the data and in 2015 we will focus on Bible stories to increase the knowledge of our students. In addition to teaching the mandatory Religious Education units of work the students are also involved in many activities of Catechesis such as Liturgies, Masses, Prayer and Christian Service.

ENGAGEMENT

One of the main goals for St Mary's in the area of Engagement is to enhance parental engagement within the school and ensure parents are true partners in the education of their children. It is vital that parents are invited to be a part of the school and Parish community and be involved in decision-making via the two parental bodies associated with the school which of course is the P&F and the School Board.

To achieve our goal 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
- Grandparents Open Day and morning tea
- Parent Information Evening
- Three-way interviews

- Open Day
- Numerous sporting events throughout the year
- And who could forget our wonderful School Concert just to name a few.

Another method that the school collects data and engages the community is through the School Climate Survey. All staff, selected students, P&F Members, selected parents and School Board members complete the survey which provides the school with valuable information about key behaviours that underpin the wellbeing, motivation, performance and experiences that staff, parents and students have at our school.

I am happy to report that the school results from all areas were very pleasing. Some strengths that were mentioned from staff were:

- Sense of team work
- Professional growth and teacher confidence
- Next year we will focus on reducing our work demands by trying to work smarter instead of harder

From the student's point of view our school strengths are:

- Students connectedness to school
- Connectedness to their peers and
- Teacher Empathy

Finally parents reported strengths in:

- School Improvement
- Teacher Moral and
- Parent Input

They also indicated that the school needs to work on classroom behaviour and reporting. To address this the staff will be involved in a review of the school's Behaviour Management Policy and the school will be completing a new system reporting process in 2015.

Our results in this survey are significantly above the average for Catholic schools in Western Australia, which is a true reflection of our school. I would like to congratulate everyone on our progress.

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, Kev, does in making our school look beautiful and welcoming. He goes beyond what is expected and for this I truly thank him for his work and discussions. 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 and also to welcome our new cleaner Natalie.

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. As a staff member and parent I can categorically say that 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 this year.

While our school is gifted with our staff it is equally important to acknowledge the tireless work of our Parents and Friends Association, who through their hard work and dedication to our children have provided funding for \$12,000 towards resources for our school in 2015. Equally important is the P&Fs contribution to the life of our school in the social and life giving initiatives undertaken this 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 for the past 6 months and I look forward to working even closer in 2015.

DISCIPLESHIP

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, Sister Leonie and Sister Rita. 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 visits the classrooms 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.

Staff development and faith formation has continued to be a focus of our school life through staff prayer and a Professional Development Day which focused on the Fruits of the Spirit – enhancing the meaning of Religious Education in the student's life. We will continue our faith development in 2015 with a staff Religious retreat to New Norcia and also investigating the program 'Making Jesus Real'.

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. A few examples of how we have achieved this in 2014 are:

- Project Compassion
- Life Link
- Staff Christian service
- Annual food drive for Merredin's Churches Fraternal

As my report draws to an end I would like to acknowledge Father Zyga, Mrs Pauline Riethmuller and Miss Zoe Bellotti for their continual support within the leadership team – your advice and backing have been an enormous strength and for this I thank you all.

In conclusion our school focus for 2015 will be on continuing to build on our Discipleship by focusing on Making Jesus Real for our students, to improve our educational standards by focusing on best teaching practises in Literacy and further improving our use of ICT within the classroom and as a better way to communicate with our community. I am also anticipating that the school and Parish community are involved in the School Improvement Plan early in 2015.

Finally to all Parish Councillors who have contributed in any way to the continual improvement of our school and the betterment of our children I thank you and wish you a very safe and holy Christmas.