

May 5, 2009

Dear Parents,

Several months ago a group of parents came to the School Board's listening session with concerns that the religious education at St. Monica needed to be strengthened. We listened to their concerns and found areas where we can improve our religious education and identity throughout our school. We want to keep the entire school body informed as to the progress we are making in this area.

The School Board members who were present at the listening session reported back to the entire School Board at the March meeting. In response, Maria Schram appointed a religious task force consisting of herself, Mrs. Schumaker, Mrs. Wong, Ms. Rice, and Mrs. Hutt to review the concerns this group of parents brought to our attention. The religious task force has met three times so far and has discussed how we can improve our religious education in four main areas: Curriculum, Catholic Identity, Faith/Sacramental Life, and Communication.

Regarding curriculum, we are in the process of reviewing textbooks and hope to have a standardized series, which meets the Archdiocesan exit expectations, in place for next year. We will be reorganizing the teacher resource room in the Ministry center and adding additional materials to supplement the textbooks. We continue to look for ways to deepen the content of what we teach in the classroom.

Regarding Catholic Identity, we are looking into ways we can do more cross-curricular assignments to further emphasize and highlight what is learned in religion. We are searching for additional ways we can celebrate Catholic culture throughout our building. We are in the process of standardizing the frequency and times of prayer throughout the day. We have examined our service projects, which total over 100 per year, and feel they are age appropriate and in keeping with safety of all our school children. We will be asking Father Jerry for a weekly bulletin space to "publish" a service act of the week, which will be headed "Our School, Our Neighborhood, Our World."

Regarding Faith/ Sacramental life, we are exploring ways to offer Reconciliation during school hours. This year we have added more all school masses. We are pursuing ways we can expose the students to Adoration, Stations of the Cross, Rosary and other faith enriching activities in a systematic way.

And finally, regarding communication, we want to keep the parents informed as to what their children are learning and doing here at school. Many great things and works go unnoticed at times. We are working towards greater transparency with regards to the religious instruction at school.

As a Catholic school, we strive for both academic and religious excellence. We have a sacred responsibility to work with you, the parents, in educating our children in mind, body and spirit. This is our highest charge and greatest joy.

As we progress in our planning and implementation, please look to the Weekly Reminder for updates. We will be using that forum to inform the entire St. Monica Community as to our endeavors.

Have a Blessed Easter Season!

Sincerely,

Colleen Hutt  
Religious Task Force  
SMS School Board

Maria Schram  
Principal