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**Marquette Catholic School is dedicated to academic excellence formed in the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Sacramental life of the Catholic Church. Marquette nurtures each child's growth in knowledge, faith and Christian stewardship fostering a life of holiness and virtue.**

August 19, 2024

Dear Staff, Families, and Parishioners,

This letter will be the first of many to help you understand the accreditation process our school will undergo this year to make our school stronger and healthier. Because Marquette Catholic school is a non-public school, we are not regulated by the state of Minnesota. Instead, all Catholic schools within our diocese have chosen to be “accredited” by a state recognized accreditation agency called MNSAA (Minnesota Nonpublic School Association). Marquette Catholic School has been accredited by MNSAA since 1989. We submit a report every year, and every seven years, we go through an intensive renewal process that includes an on-site visit by a team of educators. We asked for an extension last year as we were moving buildings, so the last time we went through this renewal process was during the 2016-2017 school year. Wow, has our school grown and changed in eight years! To renew a school’s accreditation status MNSAA looks at six standards:

- MISSION AND PHILOSOPHY
- TEACHING AND LEARNING
- CLIMATE FOR LEARNING (INC. HEALTH AND SAFETY)
- COMMUNICATION & COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS
- PERSONNEL / STAFF
- LEADERSHIP, ADMINISTRATION, GOVERNANCE (INC. FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY)

Our new administrative leadership team has been meeting weekly all summer and we have been reviewing the steps that need to happen in this renewal process, along with input and direction from Wade Mathers, the Director of Catholic Schools for the Diocese of Duluth. Here are the three main steps to accreditation renewal:

**The first step is doing a rigorous self-study.** The self-study includes two parts:

- 1) Gathering data and evidence for all six standards listed above. This helps us to truly know what our current reality is and identify the challenges we face.
- 2) Collecting feedback from the entire school community. This includes.
  - Advisory teams: Parish Leadership Team, Parish Trustees, Finance Committee, ACCE (Advisory Committee for Catholic Education)
  - School Faculty, Families, Parent, Grandparents of current and former students
  - Alumni, Parishioners, and the larger community

*We are asking for everyone's participation and prayerful, honest feedback.* There is so much good to focus on at Marquette Catholic School; however, it is vital that in this process we are honest in identifying our deficiencies. It may be difficult to bring our weaknesses to the light, but by doing so, we hope our school can become healthier and stronger.

**The second step which is to draft a school strategic plan (SSP) for the next five years 2025-2030.**

We will make the strategic plan based on the feedback we receive during the fall semester. Our entire school and parish community will be able to read that draft of that plan sometime in January/February 2025 and provide feedback as to whether we are on the right track.

**The third step is to host a site visit.** A team of 7+ educators will visit our school April 8-10, 2025. They will review all evidence, interview all staff, talk to parents, etc.

Tisha Frost will lead the administration paperwork behind the accreditation renewal process and will be supported by the steering committee made up of the following members:

- Pastor: Fr. Brandon Moravitz
- School Administration: Tami Ward, Jake Rosandich
- Former ACCE leaders: Micah Beukema and Julie Anderson
- Parish Trustees: John Skube and Kathy Marcella
- Finance Committee: Deacon Bill Hafdahl

You can expect the 2024-25 accreditation renewal process to look as follows: (Subject to change)

- August:** Form a steering committee (done)  
Meet with teachers (August 26) to discuss accreditation process; form sub-committees
- September:** A general survey sent out to all staff, families, parishioners based on standards  
The school administrative team and teachers start collecting evidence for the 6 standards
- October:** State of the School Report compiled by school administrative team and sent out to community  
All advisory teams (ACCE, PLT, Finance, etc.) will discuss the state of the school at their meetings  
The school administrative team and teachers start collecting evidence for the 6 standards
- November:** A more specific survey is sent out to all staff, current, former families, parishioners  
Additional meetings held to gather feedback from community (if necessary)  
The school administrative team and teachers start collecting evidence for the 6 standards
- December:** All evidence of the self-study should be collected
- January:** Findings of self-study reviewed by the steering committee; school strategic plan (SSP) drafted
- February:** Findings of fall self-study and a draft of SSP shared with the larger school community; feedback from community taken; edits made to SSP
- March:** Paperwork reviewed by MNSSA
- April 8-10:** Site Visit: 7+ members of MNSAA team will review evidence onsite, interview staff, parents, etc.

We know that this process of evaluating our school's reality and writing action plans for growth and improvement will take time. However, our leadership has identified areas we need to take immediate action on and that is Standards 2 and 3 (Teaching and Learning; Climate for Learning). We are immediately implementing the following changes to our learning climate for the 2024-25 school year:

- **Adding more instructional hours to the year.** This will need to be a *larger* conversation in the self-study this year but for now, we are making minor adjustments so that teachers have more instructional time: lunch and recess will be shortened by 5 minutes (40 minutes total) and Mass will be shortened to 30 minutes each day.
- **Strategically place core classes at times that will not be interrupted.**
  - All specialist classes and Mass for elementary students will be in the afternoon. This allows the classroom teachers to have more concentrated time to focus on the core classes of Language Arts and Math in the mornings.
  - Middle School electives will be moved to the end of the day. This allows more leeway for those 7th and 8th grade students participating in public school sports.
- **One cohesive schedule will be used for the entire school (both elementary and middle).**
  - There will be eight 50-minute periods with five minutes for transition in between periods as some students will travel between buildings.
  - All specialist classes (art, music/band/choir, p.e., STEM, etc.) for all grades (K-8) will be 50 minutes.
- **Equal and consistent prep time for all teachers** to allow time for collaboration time for teachers and consistency in scheduling for students.
- **Opening and closing the day with homeroom meetings.**
  - This will happen for all grades (K-8) to help students adjust to school in the morning and end their day better.
  - The overarching goals of morning and closing meetings are to promote emotional awareness, establish trust and care through prayer, support social-emotional needs for academic engagement, foster a sense of connection and community, and encourage collaboration and teamwork.
- **More professional development for our teachers focused on instruction.** “Mini-university” will be held every other Monday for our teachers to learn and implement strategies for the classroom; professional development courses on reading and writing will happen throughout the year.

We know these steps are just the beginning, and we will continue to create even more action steps this year to make a healthier, stronger school. You can look forward to more information regarding accreditation in our school communications. Look for the logo below for all communication regarding accreditation renewal.

*May all the men and women who have gone before us to make Catholic education happen here at Marquette Catholic School, pray for us.*

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