

Mother Teresa Middle School:

Employing Hope, Engagement and Well-Being To Realize Potential



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When you enter certain places, you notice a distinct feeling of pride shine through the halls.

Mother Teresa Middle School, a holistic, Ministry approved middle school located in Regina's North East, is certainly one of those places.

As a school which utilizes the Effectiveness Standards of the NativityMiguel Network, a system focused on providing high quality education opportunities for disadvantaged students, MTMS is bringing a style of education to Regina which fits this model. It incorporates small class sizes, faith based teaching, and an extended school year in an enriched and meaningful classroom setting for economically underprivileged youth.

As a charitable foundation run mainly on private donations, it is certainly a commendable accomplishment.

The school's principal Curtis Kleisinger has worked in the publicly funded school system for 16 years and was impressed by the way this system of learning delivered meaningful results for students who faced a challenging education process. "We are trying to change the way education is delivered. One of the biggest challenges that we are facing in the province is the education of disadvantaged children."

One key element of the program to help MTMS students get to their optimal level of learning has been by taking care of health issues that get in the way of learning. The school will, during the first three months of the student's time at Mother Theresa, provide them with all the necessities that they need

in order to work to the best of their abilities.

Mr. Kleisinger explained, "By providing students with the basic needs that they need to have met in order to succeed, we are addressing the underlying detriments that would have normally held them back. Simple things like getting their teeth checked up, we will drive the kids to and from a dental appointment that the school has made on their behalf."

"It's like Maslow's hierarchy of needs, if you are starving, your first priority is not going to be to learn. If you are scared, your priority is not going to be to sit in a classroom. We can address that. We've had all of our students' teeth checked. I've had their eyes tested and, as it turned out, 12 of 17 needed glasses. We had an optometrist in the community that got together with a lens fitter to make a significant contribution to the school. Now they can see."

By addressing the health, well-being, physical, moral, social, and spiritual aspects, learning can come more

naturally for students of MTMS.

A quick glance at the warm and thoughtfully arranged classroom reveals a very engaging and comfortable place for MTMS students to come, learn and take pride in their school. "I've had some students become upset because there is not school because of a stat holiday. They want to come to school and learn and be in a place where they will be engaged and focused."

At the heart of this lies the principle of trust, a bond that the staff of MTMS and the parents of the young students must share for this partnership to blossom. As a school that has a greater degree of involvement in the lives of the children, the need for this trust is even more so in order for the partnership to grow into a meaningful, life long gift.

"There is a covenant between the families and the school. This is what we, as a school, will do for the students and as a family, this is what you need to do. We realize that the parents are the primary educators. We are here to support and not to take the place of the

Cont. on page 16...



Principal Mr. Curtis Kleisinger & Sixth Grade Teacher Ms. Terri Cote inside the MTMS classroom.



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Cont. from page 14...

family," Curtis explained.

During the visit, one of the young students came up to show us a visual story completed on Prezi, a web based presentation tool. The depths of creativity and intellect shown within that presentation certainly summarized the power of Mother Teresa's tenants of hope, engagement, and well-being when placed within the mind of a fresh, bright curious young person.

Support from business and industry has played a huge role in allowing this innovative school to take flight. Donations and volunteers from companies such as Harvard Developments, the University of Regina, McPherson, Leslie and Tyerman, Stantec plus many others have helped provide a foundation upon which the school can introduce their innovative learning processes to gifted but disadvantaged students.

When you not only witness, but feel the positivity that Mother Teresa Middle School is creating within the community, this generosity is very understandable. Mr. Kleisinger summarized, "When individuals come in and witness the kind of life changing education we are providing, knowing that they will one day see these children out in the community as adults making a positive difference, being positive role models for their friends and families, has been an affirmative experience for many. We certainly rely on the generosity of individuals, government and companies in order to continue to make these positive changes."



Pictures on a MTMS classroom wall.