

MAKING THE GRADE

NEWS FROM THE OMAHA CATHOLIC SCHOOL CONSORTIUM

MAY 2016

OH THE PLACES OUR GRADUATES WILL GO!

Congratulations to this year's graduates! You have all made a significant impact on our schools and we value your contributions to our Consortium community. We can't wait to see where you will go in life! We send you off with a special commencement prayer, and a few stories from your fellow graduates. Blessings to each of you as you embark on this next journey.

PRAYER FOR GRADUATES (Living Prayers, 2016)
May God's blessing follow you all as you find new journeys to travel. May you walk safely along the pathways of your dreams. May His gentle hand guide the decisions you will make and the passions that you follow. May your hearts and lives always reflect His love and truth, and may hope be a light within you that you carry into each new day.

Amen.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHTS



Mariesa Beal – Holy Cross School
"Go be what you want to be. Stay true to who you are. Find something you really love doing," said Mariesa Beal, eighth grader at Holy Cross.

Mariesa shows wisdom beyond her age. Her life goal is to travel the world and become either a lawyer or a meteorologist. She might also consider a career in archeology since history is her favorite subject.

Outside of school, Mariesa loves to play club softball and will continue playing at Marian next year. Someday, she'd like to play for the University of California-Los Angeles or the University of Central Florida.

Mariesa appreciates her Catholic education, especially at Holy Cross. She loves that she can talk freely about God, because it's a hard subject to talk about with friends outside of school. As for Holy Cross, Mariesa feels that the school prepared her well, and gave her the opportunity to apply for scholarships and put her on the right track for life.

"I would choose Holy Cross all over again," Mariesa said. "It has prepared me for everything."

As for the friends she'll be parting ways with next year, she hopes they can stay close and keep in touch. "These last nine years were my best nine years."



Maximo Gaytan – Our Lady of Lourdes School

"The thing I would like everyone to know about me is justice," said Maximo Gaytan, Our Lady of Lourdes eighth grader. "I want everyone to care about each other. It's all about respect."

Maximo is graduating from Lourdes and continuing his education at Mount Michael Benedictine in the fall.

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STUDENT SPOTLIGHTS CONT.

Maximo Gaytan – Our Lady of Lourdes School

He's interested in playing football and soccer there, as well as continuing his success in math and English courses. Maximo enjoys math the most because "every problem has a solution."

He transferred to Our Lady of Lourdes in sixth grade and is grateful for his Catholic education. Maximo finds a Catholic education to be more challenging and focused on equality in the classroom so every student can achieve his or her personal best.

"I would always choose Catholic school. Every time," Maximo said.



Arthur Deseck – St. Bernadette School

Arthur Deseck, an eighth grader at St. Bernadette, will miss his teachers and friends the most next year when he moves on to Gross Catholic High School. Arthur hopes to play baseball and football for Gross, and continue

playing centerfield for the baseball team. At school, Arthur enjoys history class. He is especially interested in World War I. This year he wrote a Civil War diary project for class.

Arthur is grateful for his Catholic education and St. Bernadette. He enjoyed the opportunity to serve at church and participate in school Masses. He said that going to Mass twice a week was valuable to him because it made the school a better environment. He hopes to carry his Catholic faith with him in high school and encourage others around him to celebrate their Catholic faith.

Karlie Chonis – St. Thomas More School

Karlie Chonis said she plans on doing something "big" with her life. She will start her high school career next year at Gross Catholic High School after graduating from St. Thomas More this month.



"I want to do something meaningful, like joining the police force or the army," said Karlie. "My dad used to be a police officer and my brother and sister are both in the army."

Having such big goals at a young age doesn't intimidate Karlie; it motivates her to do well in school and to live her Catholic faith. She hopes to play basketball and softball at Gross, and is currently a player for the Nebraska Quakes softball team. At St. Thomas More, Karlie played basketball and volleyball and excelled in her classes. She likes math and social studies.

"I like social studies because I like hearing about how the world came to be, and the things we had to do to get here," Karlie said.

Karlie is grateful for her Catholic education because she can express her faith without being neglected or knocked down.



Bryan Gonzalez – Sts. Peter and Paul School

Bryan Gonzalez, an eighth grader at Sts. Peter and Paul, is described by Principal Cory Sepich as hard-working, kind and respectful. Bryan will be going on to Creighton Prep next fall and hopes to play soccer there.

Bryan says he loves to learn, and will always cherish his time at Sts. Peter and Paul. He loves that the school emphasizes group work and students helping each other. When Bryan grows up he wants to be a lawyer or a pediatric doctor, so he can continue to help people and learn new things.

Bryan cherishes the Catholic education that he has received. It has helped him grow and continue learning daily.

April Parent Meeting Recap

Last month, members of the Consortium leadership team visited all five member schools to share an update on enrollment, curriculum and instruction, and finances. Thank you to all who took time out of their schedules to attend these meetings. Our team greatly values the open dialogue and collaboration that takes place during these visits. We will continue to round with each school throughout the school year to share information and discuss how we can support our schools. Below are some highlights from the meetings. If you have questions or need more information, please contact the Consortium office at 402.590.2810 or nlevans@archomaha.org.

Enrollment: Nationally, Catholic elementary school enrollment has declined by 30 percent in urban dioceses and by 20.4 percent in other dioceses (NCEA, 2015). Our Consortium schools are bucking this national trend with an enrollment increase of 144 students for the 2015-2016 school year. This growth represented the largest enrollment gains throughout the Archdiocese of Omaha.

Since 2012, our member schools have grown from 1,420 pre-Kindergarten through eighth-grade students to 1,584 pre-Kindergarten through eighth-grade students. Our schools are on track to show enrollment growth again for the fourth year in a row!

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April Parent Meeting Recap cont.

When our schools experience stronger enrollment trends, tuition revenue increases, thus reducing the pressure to raise tuition each year and/or seek a greater financial investment from our supporting parishes. While enrollment increases represent a positive change for our schools, we recognize the challenges that accompany this growth. Consortium leadership is currently hiring for several teacher assistant positions to help meet the needs of our growing schools. We will continue to be intentional in allocating resources where they are most needed. The Consortium team is dedicated to helping each child achieve his or her personal best, and every decision we make in our schools reflects this goal.

Guided Reading: To help ensure the continued academic success of our students, all five Consortium schools have implemented guided reading instruction and added a new book room in each building. Guided reading is an instructional approach that assesses each child's reading abilities and then matches books at a level that helps to develop reading skills at the student's own pace. The books are challenging enough for the student to progress, but not so difficult that the student loses interest.

The new book rooms were made possible thanks to a generous gift from each school's Home and School Association. These book rooms provide books tailored to each reading level and cover a variety of subjects, interests, and genres.

Cost to Educate and the Tuition Gap: The cost to educate a child at our schools is \$5,500 annually per student compared to more than \$11,000 annually per student at Omaha Public Schools (NDE, 2015). Tuition covers less than half the cost to educate a child at our schools. The remaining amount or "tuition gap" is covered by parish support and development efforts.

How our schools are funded:

- 39% Parish Contributions
- 36% Tuition
- 13% Development and Gifts
- 12% Scholarships

Later this year, we will launch our first annual appeal as part of our fund development program. **We are currently seeking volunteers to help support these efforts.** We encourage all parents to share our story to inspire community support. To learn more about development efforts or to volunteer, call 402.590.2815.

COOL NEWS FROM OUR SCHOOLS

A FOND FAREWELL

We would like to extend a big THANK YOU to all the staff members at our Consortium schools that will not be returning next year. Thank you all for your service to our member schools! May God bless you and your families in your future endeavors.

ST. JOHN PAUL II SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

Congratulations to Our Lady of Lourdes eighth grader, Bailey Emsick who was awarded the St. John Paul II scholarship from the Polish Heritage Society of Nebraska. Bailey was honored at the Polish Constitution Day event at the Polish Home Omaha on May 1. Bailey's essay was one of four award-winning compositions.

The Polish Heritage Society of Nebraska sponsors an annual scholarship contest for eighth-grade students graduating from an Omaha Catholic grade school and planning to continue their Catholic education. The students must write an essay of at least 500 words about one of their Polish-Catholic ancestors and the impact that individual has had on their own lives as young, Polish-American Catholics.

QUALITY ACADEMICS

Did you know that all five Consortium schools are accredited through the Nebraska Department of Education? Moreover, Consortium schools follow Archdiocesan educational standards that exceed state and national requirements. Quality academics is a cornerstone of our member schools and our students consistently perform in the top 25 percent (or higher) of the nation for core subjects like math, language arts, reading, social studies and science. Our students experience a robust curriculum that includes study in traditional coursework along with an array of electives, all designed to challenge our students and provide an exceptional learning environment.

Our graduates are not only well prepared for academic success in high school and beyond, but positioned for future success in life as servant leaders. To learn more about academic outcomes in our Catholic schools visit www.lovemyschool.com.

CURRENT FAMILIES – RE-ENROLL BY MAY 12

Parents of current students, there is still time to re-enroll for the 2016-2017 school year. Current families must re-enroll and select a payment plan for tuition by **May 12, 2016**. For more information and school-specific online registration instructions, please contact the Consortium Business Office at 402.590.2810.

LIKE US ON FACEBOOK!



Be sure to check out the new Omaha Catholic School Consortium page on Facebook for updates, events and information from our member schools!

OMAHA GIVES! IS MAY 25

The Omaha Catholic School Consortium will participate in Omaha Gives! on May 25 and we need your help! Omaha Gives! is a one day event led by the Omaha Community Foundation designed to raise money for local nonprofits through online fundraising. The more money we raise, the more matching funds we will receive. The more donors who support us, the more additional prize money we can win for our schools.

To donate to our schools during Omaha Gives! Visit omahagives24.org and search for Omaha Catholic School Consortium. Click on our logo and follow the instructions to make your secure online donation. Thank you for your ongoing support of our member schools!

Alumni, We want to hear from you!

Attention alumni of Assumption, Holy Cross, Holy Ghost, Immaculate Conception, Our Lady of Lourdes, St. Agnes, St. Bernadette, St. Bridget, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Mary, St. Peter, St. Stanislaus, St. Thomas More, and Sts. Peter and Paul – we want to hear from you! Let us know where you are today and we'll keep you in the loop about what's happening at the Consortium schools. To register, go to omahacsc.org/stay-connected/alumni/.

Support Our Schools

It is through generous support from individuals, alumni, and area businesses that we are able to bring quality Catholic education to nearly 1,600 students. To discover how you can help strengthen our schools by giving the gift of your time, talent or treasures, please contact Nicole Evans, director of Development at nlevans@archomaha.org or 402.590.2815.

This is a publication of the Omaha Catholic School Consortium

To submit a story idea contact: Nicole Evans, director of Development at nlevans@archomaha.org

Visit our website at: Omahacsc.org

Mission

The Omaha Catholic School Consortium provides academic, administrative and financial support to its member schools to ensure students have access to an exceptional education in a nurturing and culturally unique environment, where they are encouraged to explore their Catholic faith and become Disciples of Christ. We are committed to Catholic education that will thrive in our community for generations to come.

Vision

We will be recognized as a sustainable model for Catholic education with schools that challenge students of many abilities to excel and become faith-filled leaders in service to God and others.

Omaha Catholic School Consortium

2117 South 33rd Street • Omaha, NE 68105 • Phone: 402.590.2810 • Fax: 402.590.2811 • [Email](mailto:info@omahacsc.org)

Para hablar con alguien en Español, favor llamar 402-557-5570.

Sources:

Living Prayers (2016). Graduation Prayer Blessings. Retrieved May 3, 2016 from http://www.livingprayers.com/eventsgraduation_prayer_blessings.html.

National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA). (2015). United States Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools 2014-2015: The Annual Statistical Report on Schools, Enrollment, and Staffing. Retrieved October 13, 2015 from <https://www.ncea.org/data-information/catholic-school-data>.

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