



MARIA High School

MARIA WOMEN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Maria High School Partners with Catalyst Charter School Network

The Sisters of St. Casimir and Maria High School are partnering with Catalyst Charter School Network to seek a new charter to provide K-12 education in Chicago Lawn

CHICAGO, IL (October 5, 2011) The Sisters of St. Casimir and Maria High School leadership announced that they are in discussions with the Catalyst Charter Schools Network to open a K–12 co-educational charter school at Maria High School’s campus at Marquette Road and California Avenue. On July 21, 2011, an application for this charter was submitted to Chicago Public Schools (CPS) by The Catalyst Schools.

If approved by CPS, the Catalyst Schools would begin a K–9 school, called Catalyst–Maria, at Maria High School’s campus in the fall of 2012. Grades 10–12 would open under the Catalyst–Maria name in the fall of 2013. Catalyst–Maria would build on the experience of educators from both the Catalyst Schools and Maria High School.

Maria High School, an all girls’ Catholic High School would continue to operate until the spring of 2013. Maria High School students who would not yet have graduated at that time would be able to apply to Catalyst–Maria to complete their high school education.

The Sisters and Maria High School faculty have historically focused on educating the whole child, instilling social, behavioral and emotional skills and academic rigor that form and shape young women who are capable of giving back to their community, city and world. Notable alums include Illinois Supreme Court Justice Anne Burke and Cook County State’s Attorney Anita Alvarez.

The economics of running a single gender private school in the Chicago Lawn neighborhood has become prohibitive. According to Sister Immacula Wendt, General Superior of the Sisters of St. Casimir, “The partnership brings together Catalyst’s experience in Grades K–8, and Maria High School’s experience in Grades 9–12. If Catalyst is successful in getting the charter, Catalyst–Maria will provide a continuum of quality education to boys and girls on Chicago’s southwest side. This has always been our history and mission, inspired by our foundress Venerable Servant of God Mother Maria Kaupas.”

“This is a beautiful and iconic building and should be filled with children,” said Maria High School President Wendy Lynn. “The imprint of the Sisters on Chicago Lawn is evident in this building, as well as in their Motherhouse and their Holy Cross Hospital, both of which are next door to the school. But the imprint on the lives of their students reaches far beyond Chicago Lawn.”

Both schools have rich histories. Maria High School (formerly known as St. Casimir Academy) was founded in 1911 by the Sisters of St. Casimir. Maria High School has a longstanding commitment to excellence in single sex education. The Catalyst Schools were founded in 2006, opening two charter campuses for Grades K–8 on Chicago’s West Side. Their school operates a values-based model of education developed by the De La Salle Christian Brothers. The Catalyst Schools’ values and mission align closely with those of Maria High School. A K–12 Catalyst school built on the strengths of these two would allow the century long legacy of the Sisters of St. Casimir of providing quality education to continue.

It is anticipated that the Catalyst Schools’ application for Catalyst–Maria will be reviewed at the November 16, 2011 CPS board meeting.

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