

Mother Teresa Catholic Academy
Executive Summary Exemplar

Part 1. Description of the School:

Describe the school's size, community/communities, location, and changes it has experienced in the last three years. Include demographic information about the students, staff, and community at large. What unique features and challenges are associated with the community/communities the school serves?

Mother Teresa Catholic Academy is a school in the Archdiocese of Chicago, the largest private school system in the United States. Since the school's founding in 1985 Mother Teresa Catholic Academy (MTCA) has delivered on the promise of blending learning with faith, and faith with daily life. As we celebrate our 30th anniversary we give thanks to God and to our school community for their unending love and support.

MTCA is located in the Springfield neighborhood in the city of Chicago and has ample access to public transportation and major roads. MTCA has been blessed with stable and growing enrollment over the past few years, there are 447 students enrolled in grades pre-kindergarten (three- and four-year olds) through grade eight who are served by 31 teachers and 5 support staff, including those in the administration, athletics, library services, custodial, food services, campus ministry and classroom aides. All members of the faculty and key administrative appointments have earned Illinois State Board Education licensure for their area of specialty and are involved in on-going professional development sponsored by the Archdiocese of Chicago. Sixty-four percent of MTCA's teachers have more than 10 years of experience, 20 percent of the teachers have advanced degrees, and nine of the 31 teachers are National Board Certified. Special area staff includes a curriculum technology coordinator, art teacher, music teacher, physical education teacher, media specialist, Title I Specialist. Additional support staff includes a front office secretary and bookkeeper, a student data management technician, a full cafeteria staff and two full time custodians. MTCA is led by a Principal and an Assistant Principal with teaching responsibilities.

Mother Teresa Catholic Academy has a diverse student population that is approximately 40 percent white, 30 percent Latino, 20 percent African American, and 10 percent Asian American. Nearly 50 percent of the student population receives free or reduced lunch and breakfast services. Nearly 80 percent of our students celebrate their faith in Catholic Parishes throughout the city. Support from our local priest and parish leadership has never been stronger and all willingly participate in Archdiocese tuition assistance programs which help our families, significantly. MTCA has an average daily attendance rate of 98 percent.

Teachers are provided time for weekly grade-level planning meetings and cross-curriculum professional learning communities. MTCA's AdvancED Accreditation Team consists of grade-level representatives who drive the process for school-based decisions.

A robust religion program supports all grades. Students enjoy mass, adoration chapel, prayer services, and retreats throughout the academic year. Faith is interwoven in our instruction within the entire curriculum. Our religion teachers are certified Catechists and are leaders in their Catholic Parishes.

Part 2. School's Purpose:

Provide the school's purpose statement and ancillary content such as mission, vision, values, and/or beliefs. Describe how the school embodies its purpose through its program offerings and expectations for students.

Mother Teresa Catholic Academy is successful in many ways and has a long history of student success due to the students, parents, faculty, administration, and staff adhering to our Mission Statement:

The school family of Mother Teresa Catholic Academy is a Catholic community of faith, committed to developing young people who will be life-long learners focused on academic excellence, leading through service, and developed to spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ.

In order to provide high levels of instruction in 21st century classrooms, a master schedule has been created to give teachers and students essential uninterrupted instructional time during the school day. MTCA's master schedule provides each grade level with common planning times. These planning times allow teachers to collaboratively design engaging lessons that focus on integrating technology with the Common Core Standards. This master schedule also provides time for teachers to participate in valuable Professional Learning Communities.

Formative assessment programs used at the school are STAR Reading and Math, Accelerated Reading and Math, and Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS). All students in primary grades are assessed using DIBELS as a literacy assessment tool, then research-based literacy interventions are used and students' progress is monitored. Remedial reading programs are offered to students who do not meet benchmark on these reading assessments. MTCA strives to meet the needs of all students by providing effective instruction that allows all students to achieve continuous academic growth. In order to provide high quality instruction matched to student need, our school uses the Response to Instruction (RTI) approach. The Professional Learning Communities meet weekly to discuss the RTI process as it pertains to individual students by monitoring individual student progress and direct changes to instruction and intervention. Research-based methods and strategies that increase the quality and quantity of instruction are utilized.

MTCA offers a variety of athletic opportunities, such as wrestling, soccer, basketball, volleyball, and baseball. We believe that athletics play a vital role in the development of the whole student and encourage participation and support by all students during their tenure at MTCA.

Professional development opportunities are constructive, practical, and aligned with school improvement efforts.

Part 3. Notable Achievements and Areas of Improvement:

Describe the school's notable achievements and areas of improvement in the last three years. Additionally, describe areas for improvement that the school is striving to achieve in the next three years.

At Mother Teresa Catholic Academy we feel it is important to celebrate our many successes while continuing to target the schools greatest areas of need. MTCA earned No Child Left Behind National Blue Ribbon School status in 2011-2012. Achieving high academic growth and maximizing student learning is our top priority. Students in grades one through eight are assessed using nationally normed tests (Terra Nova and ACT's Explore) throughout their tenure at MTCA. Over 90% of students in all grades who tested in 2014 scored at grade-level or above grade-level. Students consistently perform at the 78th percentile in all subjects; in other words, students perform better than 78 percent of students in the country.

Over the past three years Mother Teresa Catholic Academy has benefitted from capital improvements to the school, through a conscious well defined cost/benefit analysis and the creation and implementation of a five-year strategic plan. In the fall of 2013 we upgraded over 100 computers and servers, replaced a \$13,000 water heater, completed work on an \$80,000 new roof, and we began work on a window replacement initiative.

While we are proud of our achievements, we have identified school improvement goals for next academic year. The goal is for all students in all grades to perform at the 90th percentile in reading and mathematics.

Part 4. Additional Information:

Provide any additional information you would like to share with the public and community that were not prompted in the previous sections.

In academic year 2012-2013 Mother Teresa Catholic Academy became an environmentally friendly “green” school by making “Earth Day” every day. Students help care for the School’s organic vegetable garden, from seeding to harvesting. Recent student-led initiatives include reducing energy use, establishing a recycling program, and a paper/notebook reuse program. Paper cups have been eliminated from most water coolers, encouraging the MTCA community to opt for reusable water bottles. Members of our school community recycle bottles and cans; each classroom has a blue and green recycling bin. "Conserve Energy" stickers are placed in the classrooms by the light switches to remind all to turn off the lights when leaving a room. Announcements throughout the year promoting "Reduce, Re-use, Recycle" efforts. The Technology Department recycles ink cartridges and batteries. Paperless school initiatives involving communication through technology is an on-going activity. Water and Energy conservation efforts throughout the school are on-going, whenever and wherever possible

On the official Earth Day, students, faculty and parents get involved in school-wide activities such as families pledging to make a difference by acting on something Earth-friendly, and the pledges are displayed throughout the school. Students create posters and/or artwork that used recycled material that are displayed.