


**From:** Maria Donaldson schoolmail@gradelink.com   
**Subject:** Weekly Message from the Principal  
**Date:** November 19, 2015 at 2:59 PM  
**To:** The Family of Connor, Blythe Jackson aj@jrtp.com

MD

## **Weekly Message from the Principal,**

**Mary Ann McQueen**

**November 19, 2015**

### THANKSGIVING MESSAGE:

Thanksgiving is such a special national holiday. Giving thanks and expressing gratitude are so essential to the human experience. Our faith engages us in reflecting on our blessings each day! We pray in thanksgiving each day. We also pray for special and general intentions – peace, justice, good health, understanding..

I would like to extend my gratitude, my thanks to all of you! Your children are such a blessing to all of us at St. Mark School and it is an awesome privilege to educate the students at St. Mark and to engage them in their faith journey with you as our partners.

Thank you so much for your generous support of the hygiene drive and for the Loaves and Fishes food collection. We will be sharing these items with many in need in our larger community.

Thanks, parents, for all that you do for your children and the school! It is so energizing and exciting to see so many of you each day and to bear witness to the contributions that you make each day!

### ACCREDITATION:

St. Mark School is in the final stages of preparing for our WASC/WCEA Focus on Learning accreditation site visit and submission of the self-study document.

WASC (The Western Association of Schools and Colleges) and WCEA – Western Catholic Educational Association – are the two organizations that collaborate in this process. *Focus on Learning* is the self-study tool that we use to review, evaluate, examine and measure the entire school program. The focus is on how effectively the school sets high expectations for student learning in a Catholic school community and works effectively to set and meet those learning goals/expectations.

The leadership team for the self-study consists of the following people:

Self-Study Coordinator – Heidi Villaluz

Members: Sandy Debevec

Mary Ann McQueen

Mary Ann McQueen

Theresa Harrington

Tiffany Reina

Lauren Espinoza (who is off campus this year but has been able to contribute in an ongoing way to the completion of the self-study)

The entire faculty and staff have been involved in the process and have collaborated over time to examine each facet of the program, mission, Student Learning Expectations (SLE's) and other important facets of the school.

The school board has been involved in the process in that they have been involved in multiple initiatives that relate to school improvement including technology, resource management, marketing, physical plant improvement, development and safety. All of these areas are related to the quality of a student's experience at St. Mark and the capacity of the school to grow, improve and, ultimately, prepare students for their future.

In the spring of 2014 we conducted an extensive parents survey. We will be conducting an additional survey in the coming weeks and look forward to hearing from all of you!

In February the visiting team (the educators who have been selected to review our self-study and collaborate with us in the final stages of the process) will visit St. Mark School. The dates for this visit are February 16-18. Prior to the visit the team will visit St. Mark to prepare for their February visit. The chair of the visiting team is Mary Ann Murphy. Mary Ann has been a principal in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles for twenty-five years and brings tremendous depth to the work that she will do with us.

PAC, the members of the school board, parents at large, students, and Father Paul Spellman will all be involved in the visit and in preparing for the visit. We will continue to keep you updated in coming weeks.

I would like to thank the faculty and staff for their commitment to excellence and the great work that they have done to date as we have worked through the process. The work of the leadership team has been fantastic. Thanks, so much, to Heidi Villaluz for the technical and programmatic expertise that she has brought to organizing the self-study document throughout the writing and editing process.

#### ADMISSIONS AT ST. MARK:

We have had over fifty new families visit our school since September. It is so exciting to share the St. Mark experience with visitors. Students play a big part in this process including serving on a student panel to answer questions from visitors. We do not prepare the students for this and make every effort to provide a completely transparent experience. Our students have been articulate,

specific, genuine, enthusiastic and open to this experience. Many different students have participated and we will continue to include new students each time. Students who greet, host and provide hospitality to our guests play a significant role in helping visitors understand the value of a Catholic school education at St. Mark. They want their child to become like our students. The liturgical choir and Lion Lieders are also involved in the program. Parent volunteers serve as tour guides and we are so grateful to them for this gift of time and insight! Elizabeth Chartier, Tammy Zucker, Bridget Rohmer, and Pammela Jackson have all lead tours this year. If you would be interested in participating in the admissions process by serving as a tour guide please let Mrs. McQueen know.

Parents, if you are planning to apply for admission to St. Mark School for a sibling of a current student, please do so as soon as possible. We are excited to include additional family members and want to plan accordingly. You can obtain an application from the school office or from the school's website. Please submit your application by December 14, 2015.

If you know of families that might be interested in St. Mark School please encourage them to visit our website and to attend an Admission Outreach Program. Our next session is on December 15, 2015. And, thanks to Mrs. Maria Romero, the sessions include a beautiful breakfast buffet!

#### FIELD TRIP TO ST. MONICA HIGH SCHOOL

The 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grades visited St. Monica this morning to attend their musical production of *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*. The students traveled to Santa Monica on public transit. Thanks so the middle school teachers and to parent volunteers for making this experience possible.

#### STEM SUMMIT AT ST. BERNARD:

The following four students attended the STEM Summit at St. Bernard this year. This engineering experience provides students with a glimpse into their academic and professional future and the possibilities available to them:

Kaitlin Gonzalez

Nico Trevino

Evan Cantrell

Ava Purcell

#### ALLADDIN:

The parent meeting takes place this evening at 6:30 in the Library! Please plan to attend if your child is interested in participating as a member of the cast or crew! Thanks so Ms. Pagrynski and Mrs. Harrington (choreography assistance will be provided by Ms. Musulin) for leading this exciting program!

GRANDPARENTS DAY:

Friday, April 15 – Please mark your calendar! Ann Shrake is serving as the chair of Grandparents Day and you will be hearing more from Ann about this very special event at St. Mark!

SANTA MONICA PONY BASEBALL:

It's time to register for Santa Monica Pony Baseball for the 2016 Spring season. Divisions for kids ages 3-14 and draw from all over the west side. If you are interested please see the attached flyer.

DECEMBER HOMEWORK CLUB ATTACHED-

Note:

If you reply to this email please confirm that it is directed to Maria Donaldson, [mdonaldson@stmarkschool.com](mailto:mdonaldson@stmarkschool.com). Your reply cannot be delivered if you use our bulk email address ([schoolmail@gradelink.com](mailto:schoolmail@gradelink.com)).



DEC. HOMEWORK  
CLUB 2015.pdf



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**Register now. Space is limited.**  
[www.SantaMonicaPonyBaseball.com](http://www.SantaMonicaPonyBaseball.com)

**After registering, each player must attend one of the following player evaluations:**

**Los Amigos Park, 6th Street and Hollister Street, Santa Monica**  
**Saturday, January 9, 2016 OR Saturday, January 16, 2016**

*(if one of these dates is rained out. makeun date will be Saturday. January 23. 2016)*