



Our Strategic Focuses

A Newsletter for MCS Foundation Members
September 2016

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Message from the Chairperson



It should not be foreign to you that in 2005 the Foundation took over from the Maryknoll Sisters as the School sponsoring body (SSB) of Maryknoll Convent School and that the “core values” of the Sisters became the MCS Mission and Vision. It is therefore the role and duty of the Foundation to oversee the actualization of MCS Vision and Mission and to steer the operation and strategic development of the School.

The world is ever changing and we cannot be complacent and live in a comfort zone of the past. We need constantly to evaluate ourselves to find ways to improve in a competitive and dynamic environment. As 2015 marked the 10th anniversary of the Foundation (the 90th year of MCS), we thought it was a right time to do some self-reflection and plan forward. We noted that for the past 10 years, there were a lot of challenging changes in our education system. The DSE has replaced HKCEE and A-levels while the IMC (a legal entity with clear operational duties and representation from SSB, teachers, alumni and parents) has replaced the SMC as the School management board. The value and culture of Hong Kong are quite different from what they were 10 years ago. Our girls or young people in general need to face new challenges unheard of in our school days. It is under these circumstances that the Foundation concluded that we need to review and set out overall directions for the future development of the School.

The study which took nearly a year to complete was led by a Task Force made up of 7 members, including Supervisors and Acting Supervisors of both sections with the support and collaboration of the Principals and panel heads. Their hard work provided recommendations on the strategic level to the Council, to be implemented by the IMC at the planning and operational level. The Strategic Focuses, developed and based on our Vision and Mission, were endorsed by the Council on 23 June 2016 and were shared with all key stakeholders, namely the IMC, Trust, FSA and, also, the teachers and staff of both sections in early July 2016.

We would like to share the latest development of the School in fuller details with you at the upcoming Foundation AGM on 24 September. Please join us!

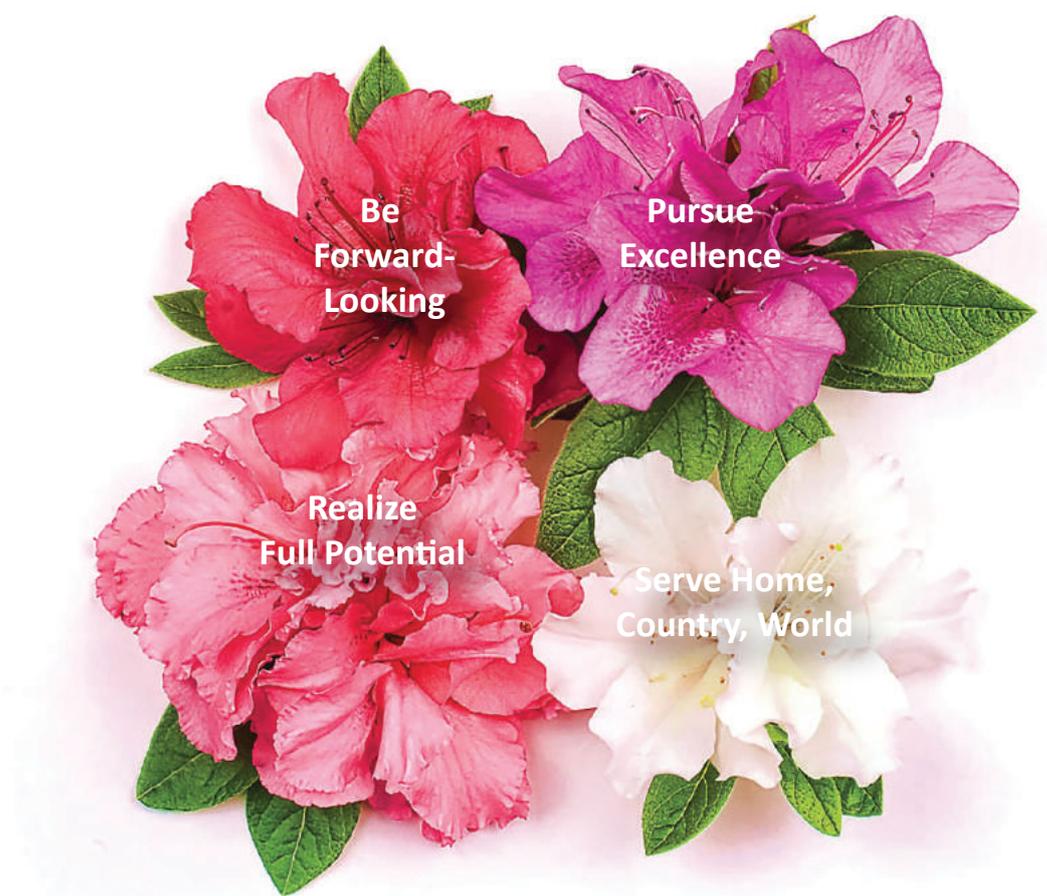
Barbara Hung
Chairperson, MCS Foundation



4 Strategic Focuses



Given the ever-changing landscape (both internally and externally), it is imperative that we contextualize and actualize our Vision and Mission - we have developed 4 strategic focuses.



Strategic Focus: SERVE HOME, COUNTRY, WORLD

Continue to promote the notion that service is a way of life for Maryknollers, our duty to home, to country, to the world; and to provide experiences that enable students to grow as individuals and contributors to society

Service has been, is and will always be a core value, a way of life for Maryknollers. It is no coincidence that we start our 4 Strategic Focuses with service, because this notion is not only promoted, but consistently practiced by all at Maryknoll, part of our DNA. It is a precious gift we inherited from Maryknoll Sisters, who came to Hong Kong and China over 90 years ago to serve.

A Maryknoller is expected to be “a loving person, and a compassionate person, who is willing to serve others.” During their time at school, our girls’ service training starts early and young in Primary 1 with a carefully planned Service Learning Programme to gradually develop our girls’ sense of service, within the school and in the local community. This is continued all the way to Secondary where it truly blossoms to a wide range of service activities, many of which are initiated by students, and extended beyond the boundaries of Hong Kong.

Maryknoll Sisters believe that the educational goal of providing experiences that enable students to grow as individuals cannot be separated from the goal of developing them as responsible contributors to society. Therefore, service is interwoven into our school life and beyond.

When you meet a Maryknoller, she is always willing to go the extra mile. She sees it as her duty to help and serve, whether it is at home, in her country, and by this, it could mean Hong Kong, China, or any local community she resides in and as such, it might not necessarily mean a sovereign country, and the greater world.

A Maryknoller dedicates herself to something that is greater and bigger than herself.

As Sr. Rose Duchesne once said: “The moral, intellectual and social values acquired by the students were meant to be shared with the larger society.”

Going forward, we will continue to be proactive in responding to the needs of the community and the world, and to enable students to find their personal identity which is interwoven with the notion that they are created and loved by a divine being, that God is within us.

Strategic Focus: PURSUE EXCELLENCE

To pursue excellence is to instill in our students and teachers, a strong growth mindset where they are inquisitive, resilient, reflective and responsible in all their pursuits, aim high while staying humble, seek out opportunities for improvement, and celebrate both participation and achievement

To “Pursue Excellence” is clearly articulated in our Vision and Mission.

Notice we chose the word PURSUE and not ACHIEVE because the Pursuit of Excellence is a process, a journey, an attitude. It’s not just the 5** or the trophies and awards that define our excellence; it’s how we take on the challenge to get there, it’s our mindset.

What kind of mindset? A “growth mindset”, a concept developed by world renowned Stanford University psychology professor Carol Dweck in her book Mindset, as opposed to a “fixed Mindset”, is a belief that abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work – that intelligence, talent and given resources are just the starting point.

Where there is a growth mindset, there is the drive to proactively reflect on effort and progress, motivation to seek continuous improvement and not be complacent, there is a resilience to cope during tough times and not view challenges as debilitating or catastrophic. A growth mindset is essentially an optimistic and forward looking attitude, very much in line with the Maryknoll spirit, to be shared by teachers as well as students.

At the Council, we discussed and debated what we mean by excellence, and this is what we have concluded: At Maryknoll, our view of Excellence is multi-faceted: it’s knowing your own or your students’ abilities, talents and strengths and developing them to their full potential; it’s having high expectations and wanting to stretch yourself beyond your comfort zone to achieve your personal best. As recommended by Archie McGlynn in his Critical Friend Review, MCS should aim high and capitalize on the strength of the Maryknoll culture and the resources in the MCS community to create an ethos of improvement. And of course, this ethos of improvement is the very basis of the Maryknoll value of humility – even when we achieve, we are not boastful, we are not arrogant; instead we are humbled by God’s glory, and motivated by our own inadequacies to learn more and do better.

And that is why we value and celebrate both participation and achievement. Because whether we only participate or we achieve, we know that we have invested time and effort, made sacrifices and tried our best; we are prepared to achieve and win (though never at the expense of each other), but we are also prepared to lose with grace and have the resilience to pick ourselves up and strive for future successes.

Matthew 5:15 – No one lights a lamp and puts it under a bowl; instead he puts it on a lampstand, where it gives light for everyone in the house.

When we do achieve excellence, we celebrate, we share, and we inspire each other.

Strategic Focus: REALIZE FULL POTENTIAL

Optimize the conditions for students to realize their potential to the full by proactively seeking out the best available academic and non-academic opportunities, based on individual students' needs and gifts, and an appropriate balance of support and challenge

It is our mission to help students realize their potential to the full. Indeed, it is the great gift of educators.

Every student comes to us as a seed, with the potential for growth. If given the essentials – soil, water, sunshine – every seed can sprout. However, we want the seeds to more than simply sprout; we want them to develop their full potential, to fully blossom, just as we want our students to flourish. That is why we need great teachers who will go beyond giving the essentials, who understand their students' individual needs and gifts well enough that they know what the optimal conditions are, in and out of the classrooms, to realize their potential to the full.

Academically, we hear a lot about learner diversity from both Primary and Secondary in recent years. No doubt, it has become more and more difficult to teach a class with a wider range of abilities. The old paradigm does not work anymore, so teachers have devised new ways, began trying a student-centered pedagogy, and Primary and Secondary subject panels are collaborating to develop curricular continuums to enable differentiated teaching so that teachers can optimally and appropriately support students who need more help, stretch those in the middle and challenge high ability students with extended learning to keep them motivated. We call this 「拔尖提中補底」. A reference to Archie McGlynn's Critical Friend Review report, as well as feedback from our teachers, suggest that we can and should raise expectations on our girls. Indeed, we are lucky that close to 80% of the F6 Maryknoll graduates would have spent 12 years with us. What an opportunity for Maryknoll teachers to make a difference in each of our girls' lives!

Beyond academics, Maryknoll emphasizes an all-round education for our girls, so there has always been a vibrant school life. In a fast-changing world with a global context, teachers need to give students intentional guidance in their extra-curricular pursuits and proactively seek out non-academic opportunities that will broaden the horizon of students and deepen their experience so they are equipped to enter an uncertain, volatile future. As an aided school, we may feel that we are constrained by resources, that opportunities are inaccessible to us. Yet by being creative and resourceful, and with a growth mindset, teachers can leverage external resources, especially the Maryknoller and parent networks and find the best available opportunities for our students. The million-dollar sports fund, the mentorship program, and the educational and clinical psychologists' support from the Trust are just some examples. Teachers are also encouraged to pursue their own interests and passions as role models to students. After all, how many of us have gotten into debates, learned to appreciate literature, pursued a sport because of some inspiring and resourceful teachers' passions?

Meeting individual student needs to develop their potential to the full is a tremendously difficult task, yet isn't this clearly stated in our Vision and Mission, and also the calling of educators?

Strategic Focus: BE FORWARDING-LOOKING

Be forwarding-looking in leading the school, developing teachers and staff, and most important of all, creating learning and development opportunities for students preparing them for the globally connected VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) world

Forward-looking is our heritage. Maryknoll Sisters are trailblazers, visionaries who are always ahead of their time, who always have a broad and global view, so they can better serve the society. It is hard but it is also our responsibility as a top performing school with a rich history and strong heritage to balance our energy and attention between protecting the past, and looking forward to anticipate the future.

Now that the Sisters have entrusted us with the School, we must lead the School with the same forward-looking view. As a recent UNESCO report says, “Education is expected to prepare individuals by giving them capability to adapt and to respond.” So a forward looking mindset is also the way to realize our vision and mission.

In addition to anchoring our girls with strong Christian values and the Maryknoll spirit, to be forward looking in practice means creating learning and development opportunities to impart 21st century learning skills, namely critical thinking, communication, collaboration and creativity; offer experiences beyond the classroom, expose them to issues of the wider world – so our students have broad perspectives, willing to take risks, and are equipped to cope, thrive and contribute in a globally connected, volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) world.

The same goes for our teachers who live and teach in a VUCA world. As teachers dedicate all the time to nurturing students, when was the last time they invested in their personal growth? Professor Cheng Kai Ming, in his recent paper remarked that in this new era, “individuals have to learn, and they have to learn all the time.” Thus, the Council and the Trust are fully supportive of teachers’ development. Just as we nurture each individual student according to their gifts, we would develop teachers based on individual needs and responsibilities within the School structure. A forward-looking training and development plan could include conferences, MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), education research, leadership training, and more. Inspired teachers will bring new perspectives back to the school community, which will in turn benefit the learning of our students and enrich our School culture.

A forward looking school leadership is more than taking a rigorous PIE (Planning, Implementation and Evaluation) approach to develop a visionary 5 year plan. We confidently manage our resources –people, finances, and technology, with succession plans in teaching, management and operations. We identify opportunities to align the Primary and Secondary sections, such as the curriculum continuum. We engage diverse views beyond the school campus for constructive deliberation. We reach out to connect in order to keep abreast with and learn from local and global issues. We are intentional in marking out time and space to reflect, not reacting and catching up, but prepared for anticipated changes and challenges far ahead.

As Sister Jeanne said, “A school cannot stand still. Just as Pope Francis has recognized evolution, we too must recognize the need for MCS to meet the changing circumstances of unfolding the new.”

Sharing Session, 12 July 2016

On 12 July 2016, the Foundation led a Sharing Session at an unprecedented event where all teachers and staff from both Primary and Secondary sections participated to communicate and discuss the 4 Strategic Focuses that will take our School forward.

The 4 Strategic Focuses were a culmination of 12 months' work by 7 Task Force members (comprising Foundation Council members, Supervisors and Deputy Supervisors of both sections, with input from Principals and key teachers) after studying over 90 school reports, research articles, journals and books.

After the presentation, teachers and staff discussed their feedback with Council members, IMC, Trust, FSA and parent representatives in groups. Throughout the presentation, an "agricultural metaphor" (inspired by Sir Ken Robinson) was used to describe students (and teachers!) as seeds with the potential for growth, teachers as gardeners to realise the full potential, and IMC and SSB working together to ensure the optimal conditions are provided for a healthy ecosystem.

As a symbol of passing the important task of implementing the 4 Strategic Focuses via the IMCs for the benefit of our girls, Foundation Chairperson, Barbara Hung, presented potted plants to the Principals (Mrs Josephine Lo and Ms Melaine Lee) and Supervisor/Deputy Supervisor (Helen Yu and Kenzie Lau). Teachers and staff were also invited to take home a plant of their choice.

All teachers and staff from Primary and Secondary sections, and representatives of IMCs, Trust and FSA gathered with Foundation Council members





Maryknoll Convent School Foundation Twelfth Annual General Meeting

Date: 24 September 2016 (Saturday)
Time: 3:00 p.m.
Venue: Maryknoll Convent School
(Secondary Section)
2/F., Jockey Club Wing
5 Ho Tung Road, Kowloon Tong

We hope to see you there!

We wish all our
Foundation members a
Happy Mid-Autumn
Festival!

