

Head's Report to the QMS Society – AGM November 14, 2011

The 2010/2011 school year saw the celebration of the 90th anniversary of the founding of Queen Margaret's School. In keeping with the tradition of planting trees for special occasions, a Katsura tree, a rapidly growing deciduous tree with distinctive characteristics, was planted in the garden area in front of Founder's Hall. According to Chinese legend, the Katsura tree symbolizes our search for identity and pursuit for the values we all carry within us.

The symbolism and distinctive characteristics of the Katsura tree illustrate the visionary, self reliant and determined personalities of our founder's Miss Denny and Miss Geoghegan. These ladies, founded the school of their dreams where students would go out into the world with the stamp of the school upon them and its ideals, loyalty, self-discipline and service, in their hearts. Miss Denny and Miss Geoghegan demonstrated that we are all capable of achievement, of service and of realizing ourselves as complete individuals, leaving a legacy now entrusted to us, to dare to lead and follow our dreams.

With this being our legacy, our 90th year of operation continued to highlight growth and progress. The addition of designated classroom and playground space expanded our Early Childhood Education offerings to include a three year old program in addition to the previously established Junior Kindergarten program. Thirty eight children benefitted from participation in these programs under the guidance and direction of Program Manager, Mrs. Stacy Paton and her dedicated staff. Continued parental interest in a class for grade 8 boys lead to further discussions on programming options and an analysis of program demand by the school administration and admission teams. The decision was made to offer a grade 7/8 boys program during the 2011/2012 school year, and the thirteen students currently enrolled in this class are being challenged and inspired by classroom teacher, Mr. Dominic Smith.

Although enrolment numbers are stable, the continued economic challenges worldwide have had an impact on student enrolment with the admission of new students being lower than projected; however, student retention targets were achieved with 81% of both day and boarding students re-registering. Increased cultural diversity within our international students was noted with students representing 11 countries including Vietnam, Germany, Venezuela and Australia. Marketing and recruitment strategies have included the greater use of mobile technology including Facebook and Twitter. Currently 647 people 'like us' and 531 'follow us'. We were also pleased to host a Vietnamese Media delegation to lunch and a tour of our school as they explored educational opportunities for Vietnamese students in the province of British Columbia. Given the combination of planning, marketing and the quality of the School's programs, enrolment figures are expected to weather the economic challenges, providing stability for future growth.

The exceptional learning environment and numerous opportunities outside of the regular classroom have continued to create an environment of achievement, inspiring and nurturing students to develop their intellectual abilities and discover their creative and athletic talents. Highlights from the 2010/2011 school year include the awarding of 51 Honours and Honours with distinction certificates to deserving senior students in addition to the presentation of 53 Merit certificates for outstanding effort throughout the school year at the final assembly. With 100% university acceptance, our graduates also received scholarship offerings exceeding \$180,000. "Presentations of Learning" by our Junior Students and "Project Based Learning" opportunities for grade 8 and 9 provided a medium for students to share their knowledge and develop their presentation skills. By weaving interdisciplinary themes and 21st century learning skills into core subjects, there continued to greater engagement of students in the learning process.



The Fine Arts also provided a source of pleasure throughout the course of the school year. In addition to the annual Remembrance Day Service, Junior School Christmas Play, Candlelight Carol Service and Arts and Culture Salon, senior music students also shared their gifts and talents with host schools in Scotland and England during their Spring Break tour of the British Isles. The school production, "The Secret Lives of Girls", drew fine performances from a dedicated cast. This thought provoking drama, pushed both cast and audience members to re-examine their personal and social interactions, as the issue of bullying amongst friends was explored.

Outdoor education opportunities at all grade levels continue to challenge and inspire students to stretch themselves, have trust in their partners and belief in themselves. During the 2010/2011 school year, 28 students were pursuing qualifications for Duke of Edinburgh awards, with medal presentations to three students.

The equestrian program continued to grow with a minimum of 160 lessons per week being taught by the coaching staff. The success of our programming and passion of other young riders was evident with a record number of ribbons being won at all major horse shows.

Our Chapel theme, "Dare to Lead" set the tone for a renewed focus on the importance of service and respectful relations, encouraging students to make meaningful contributions to our local and global communities. The "Virtues Program" provided a focus for the Junior School, with a different virtue been introduced and practiced each month. Through membership in the Global Issues Club, senior students were encouraged to share their interests in current affairs, intercultural dynamics and international politics. Participation in Model UN Conferences gave students first-hand experience of the importance of research, debate and negotiation. With the support of service coordinator, Ms. Tamara Murdoch, students gave over 6000 hours of service through involvement in both local and global initiatives.

Under the mentorship of Ms. Sharon Klein, Deputy Head of Education, and Mrs. Susan Cruikshank, Junior School Principal, teachers also challenged themselves to stay abreast of best practices in teaching and learning with professional development focused on assessment for learning, building literacy skills and using technology. Exploration and review of AP (Advance Placement) classes and the philosophy of the IB (International Baccalaureate) program continue.

Over the past five years, QMS has been pursuing a number of priorities that are re-shaping the school, demonstrating the importance placed on providing our students with quality learning, teaching and living environments. During the 2010/2011 school year, the Board of Governors, with input from the QMS Management Team reviewed the QMS Strategic Plan and discussed future directions. Five strategic priorities were identified: Educational Quality, Leadership and Service Opportunities, An Engaged and Connected Community, Institutional Advancement, and Resources and Facilities. The QMS Strategic Plan Document will be published on the school website in the near future.

In addition, a closer look at the Campus Master Plan and Development and Advancement opportunities were explored by the Board. Gary Ali Architects was hired to develop a Campus Master Plan that would support and sustain our programming requirements and address future growth, including the Intermediate centre, Library, rebuilding or renovation of the Student Residences and Early Childhood Centre, traffic flow and parking. Centered around the theme 'The Heart of Education' which focuses on the importance of positive and caring relationships in a students' educational experience, the campus master plan presented pulls you in to the heart of our campus, a traffic free centre where students can congregate safely, surrounded by state of the art learning spaces, designed to meet the learning needs of the 21st century learner.

At this time, I also would like to acknowledge and thank the Board of Governors for their commitment of significant time, energy and forethought on behalf of the school. It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the work of outgoing Board member, Mr. Mike DeBeck, and thank him for his service. Completing three terms on the Board of Governors, Mike DeBeck played an instrumental role in the campus renewal plan and moving



the school forward. The ongoing support of the board continues to be critical to our school's steady progress and educational improvement.

Also fundamental to the success of any school are the relationships between the school and both the Alumnae and parent groups. Research studies have shown time and time again that a significant feature of maximizing student success at school is the participation and supportive engagement of parents in their child's education. Under the direction of association chairs, Ms. Judith Parsons, Mrs, Dola Boas, the Parent Auxillary and OOMA, are committed to building strong positive relationships and undertaking a variety of annual fundraising initiatives including the Bazaar, and Strawberry Tea for the continuing benefit of Queen Margaret's School. Last year's Gala Committee, under the leadership of Mr. and Mrs. Steve and Nicole Paras-Charleton, provided a wonderful evening of entertainment, fundraising and community building.

Finally, a closing thank you goes to all our staff and families who call QMS home. Your commitment to connect with, bond and build the community of QMS is commendable and appreciated.

Strong academics, athletic success, a distinguished fine arts program, and a commitment to service learning confirm the quality of the learning that takes place at QMS. These, combined with stable enrolment and fundraising strength, ensure we are well positioned to continue the legacy entrusted to us by our founders, Miss Denny and Miss Geoghegan.

Respectfully submitted

Wilma Jamieson, Head of School

