

# Mother Teresa Middle School

A Jesuit Academy



PUTTING RECONCILIATION INTO ACTION



**Fostering hope. Unlocking potential. Breaking the cycle of poverty.**

**A \$25 million endowment campaign to sustain a high-quality education for vulnerable youth.**

THE MOTHER TERESA MIDDLE SCHOOL  
ENDOWMENT FUND

CASE FOR SUPPORT 2020

*FOR OUR CHILDREN. FOR REGINA. FOR ALL TIME.*



Ashantay: "Mother Teresa Middle School has helped me a lot."

# Ashantay's Story

"They have hearts of gold"

Not every kid could emerge from the traumas that Ashantay has experienced and keep on going with such drive, energy, and even good humour. But Ashantay isn't every kid.

Ashantay's father was an alcoholic. He was seeking to recover, yearning to rejoin family life. But when Ashantay was getting ready to start grade five, her father died a tragic death, killed in a train accident.

"That took a huge toll on my mom," says Ashantay, 17. "They'd been together since they were in high school."

Ashantay's mom numbed her pain with drugs and alcohol and steadily lost the ability to raise Ashantay and

her younger brother. An older brother moved away so he wouldn't have to bear witness to their mother's downward spiral. Ashantay skipped a lot of school in grade five, and her future looked grim.

For grade six, Ashantay was accepted into Mother Teresa Middle School (MTMS). Her mother's drug use intensified, her mental health deteriorated, and Ashantay did her best to help raise her younger brother without missing too much school. When she did skip, the staff at Mother Teresa took notice.

"In elementary school, when I missed no one seemed to care," she says. **"At Mother Teresa, when I didn't show up they sent someone to my house to check on me and bring me to school."**

When Ashantay was in grade eight, her mom's

After graduating from Mother Teresa Middle School, the transition to high school was difficult. Ashantay was now parentless and thrust into a stressful setting in a new school. She struggled at first. She had suicidal thoughts. She suffered.

But as a member of the Mother Teresa Middle School family, Ashantay got the support she needed. Teachers who care deeply about her well-being; teachers who see her potential. Ashantay's MTMS teachers stayed in touch, checked in regularly, and provided help whenever she needed it. She ultimately succeeded. She joined the school's basketball team, performed well academically in a school known for its rigour, and started to do better socially. In her grade 12 year, she stood confidently in front of the

## MTMS has helped Ashantay find stability amid traumatic circumstances.

drug use was out of control. She would disappear for days at a time, and Ashantay, then 13, would often stay home to take care of her three-year-old brother. And then, tragedy struck the family yet again.

Ashantay came home one April day to find her mother dead of an overdose while her little brother looked on. Ashantay was devastated, but she did not crumble. At the funeral, Ashantay—remember, still only 13—eulogized her mom and implored her fractured family to unite and connect.

She dusted herself off, moved in with relatives, returned to school within a few days, and did not miss a day for the rest of the term. Her leadership skills and strength of character were recognized through her selection as class valedictorian. Her words were inspiring and profound.

entire student body to share her very personal story. Ashantay is doing well. And she will do even better.

After graduation, Ashantay plans to pursue a social work education in Calgary or at the University of Regina, where she has already been accepted.

"Mother Teresa Middle School has helped me a lot and they've been a really good influence," she says. "They have hearts of gold."

MTMS has helped Ashantay find stability amid traumatic circumstances.

The Mother Teresa Middle School Endowment Fund will ensure that the school can help hundreds of vulnerable young people like Ashantay for many years to come—resilient young people of character who possess tremendous potential to succeed.



# The Campaign in Brief

- As an Associate School of the Regina Catholic School Division, Mother Teresa Middle School is partially funded by the Government of Saskatchewan, but it is its robust culture of philanthropy that has given the school the ability to excel and improve continuously.
- In 2018–2019, for example, the school's total expenses were \$1.95 million of which \$1.4 million came from private donations and foundations. Under the current funding model, a significant level of private support is required each and every year.
- The new Mother Teresa Middle School Endowment Fund has been launched to ensure that funds are available in perpetuity for Mother Teresa Middle School to achieve ever-rising levels of success and excellence.
- Mother Teresa Middle School gives some of our city's most vulnerable kids real hope for a stable, successful future. The school is breaking the cycle of despair and poverty. MTMS is changing lives. And by changing lives, MTMS is changing Regina.
- This endowment campaign seeks to raise \$25 million. Your gift is an investment in the future of our community.

## Background

In the mid-1990s, Regina business leader Paul Hill and his wife Carol Hill travelled to India as part of a group of CEOs to visit Mother Teresa. The visitors were moved by her message and wondered aloud how they could support her efforts to improve lives and communities. They were all prepared to contribute financially to her work.

*"I don't want your money," Mother Teresa said to the business leaders. "What I would like you to do is go back to your community, identify a need in that community, and then give of yourself and your resources to fill this need."*

These words were the initial inspiration behind the establishment of Mother Teresa Middle School. It was a vision further inspired and informed by the NativityMiguel Network of Schools in the United States.

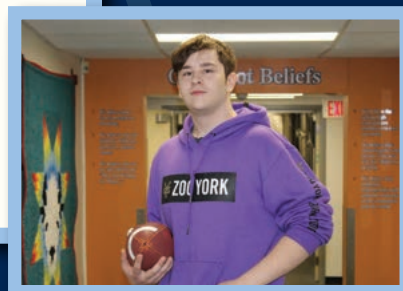
In 2007, project proponents rallied together partners of Harvard Developments Inc., the Regina Catholic School Board, Campion College, and the Jesuits of English Canada to develop a new, innovative, Jesuit middle school for Regina's most vulnerable and economically challenged youth, including many Indigenous children.

The community dreamed big, everyone rolled up their sleeves, and the doors of Mother Teresa Middle School opened in September 2011. Lives have been changed ever since.

Mother Teresa's request had been fulfilled, but what is required now as MTMS completes its first decade of operation, **is a financial plan to sustain and enhance the school for all time.** The new Mother Teresa Middle School Endowment Fund is designed to meet that objective. The time to rally together as a community has arrived. We must join together, we must work together, **we must contribute together to meet the needs of our current and future students.**

"I'm taking more classes this year than I ever have before, and I'm passing all of them with the best grades I've ever had. **They taught me at Mother Teresa that I was destined for greatness.** I'll always remember that because I think they're right."

—Cole, Mother Teresa Middle School Alumnus, Current Grade 12 Student, Miller Comprehensive Catholic High School, Planning to attend Saskatchewan Polytechnic in the fall



# The MTMS Difference

*"We believe that all students will learn and every minute counts"*

**A**t Mother Teresa Middle School, each child is expected to read a book of their own choosing for 30 minutes after lunch every day.

In monitoring the initiative in its early days, it became clear that not all of the students were getting 30 minutes of reading time because they had to line up for their food. The first kids in line finished eating first and had a full 30 minutes to read. The last kids in line had somewhat less time to enjoy their books.

And so, food service was promptly changed. Instead of buffet style, food was delivered to the tables so that no child would run the risk of losing even a minute of reading time.

Not an especially dramatic story, but indeed indicative of the school's focus on giving their students as much enrichment as

possible. **Every minute matters. Every student matters. Every future matters.**

Mother Teresa Middle School is driven to find each student's strengths and then provide a rich, individualized education in the classroom and through **over 40 after-school enrichment activities**, summer leadership programs, and a remarkable mentorship program where students are paired with adult role models from all walks of life in Regina.

The school works hard to remove any barriers that could compromise a child's pursuit of success. To that end, MTMS: provides two meals and two snacks a day; provides transportation to and from school and to and from extra-curricular events; arranges for eye, dental, and hearing appointments; provides school clothing; connects

students to counselling services when required; keeps a supply of donated clothing and footwear for students who can't afford new clothes, and offers other important supports.

Perhaps the greatest contribution to the success and well-being of students is the fact that once you are an MTMS student, you are *always* an MTMS student. The school's **Graduate Support Program** offers resources and guidance as students leave grade eight to attend high school. Graduates participate in career navigation activities through MTMS to help them select high school courses, and a College and Career Coach will help students select courses based on their strengths, interests, and career aspirations. MTMS also helps its alumni with university tuition, textbooks, setting personal budgets, completing job applications, developing résumés, and other essential life skills to help them through post-secondary education and beyond.

MTMS grads return to the school often for the services and support they need. But sometimes they simply come by to say hello and to visit their MTMS family. **MTMS teachers and administrators are their advisors, their navigators, their champions, their advocates, their safe harbour in stormy weather.**

Every minute matters at  
Mother Teresa Middle School.

# Mother Teresa Middle School

By the numbers

In the current school year (2019–2020), there are 56 students enrolled in grades 6–8.

Since opening for the 2011–2012 school year, 101 students have transitioned into high school from grade eight.

Of 157 current students and alumni, 73% are Indigenous.

68% of MTMS alumni have been accepted to or have already started post-secondary education.

71% of the 101 alumni have graduated high school “on time” (i.e., within three years of entering grade 10). This compares with 87% of non-Indigenous and 45% of Indigenous students in Saskatchewan.

If measuring high school graduation rates within four years after entering grade 10, the 71% graduation rate jumps to 88%.

## Return on Investment

Achieving results for our community

Every dollar we invest in a student’s success will generate a remarkable social and economic return as alumni find their place in the economy.<sup>1</sup>

Mother Teresa Middle School is working to give our students the tools they need to succeed, lead, make new discoveries, open businesses, employ others, create, innovate, excel, and raise remarkable children of their own.

Studies show that students who graduate high school will earn an average of **\$10,000**<sup>2</sup> a year more over the course of their careers than a non-graduating counterpart. A student who graduates with a bachelor’s degree from a post-secondary institution will earn **\$34,000** a year more

than someone who doesn’t graduate from high school. **By motivating and equipping more students to graduate, MTMS is giving its students an opportunity to leave poverty behind. The opportunity to break the cycle.**

In Saskatchewan, there are about 2,500<sup>3</sup> complex, multigenerational families living in poverty who each cost the public purse up to \$7 million a year through various forms of social assistance, incarceration, addictions support, and other social costs. Grandparents, their children, their grandchildren, and their great-grandchildren—families living in cycles of poverty, crime, addiction, and poor health. MTMS is working to break that cycle.

<sup>1</sup> Mother Teresa Middle School has undertaken a study to quantify its economic impact and social return on investment. The study is in progress and data will be available at a later date.

<sup>2</sup> Gabriel Dumont Institute, SUNTEP: An investment in Saskatchewan’s prosperity, 2017

<sup>3</sup> Dale McFee, former Deputy Minister, Saskatchewan Ministry of Corrections and Policing. Data are from 2016–2017.



# Reconciliation and Celebration

## Embracing Indigenous identity and practice

When Student Service Assistant Evan Whitestar approached Executive Director Curtis Kleisinger in 2016 with an offer to launch Indigenous cultural programming at Mother Teresa Middle School, Kleisinger only had one question: “What do you need to make this happen?”

The school’s enthusiasm for Indigenous cultural programming—singing, dancing, and the Buffalo Boys drum group, among other activities—is entirely consistent with its philosophy. **Mother Teresa Middle School is a Jesuit institution that encourages its students to be *spiritually alive*, regardless of their culture and faith background.** The school is built on a foundation of trust, it embraces diversity, and celebrates the good values and principles that all faiths share.

The drum, says Whitestar, is all about values. Honesty. Humility. Integrity. The Buffalo Boys meet regularly to practise as a team. To drum as a group requires passion, focus, discipline, and rigour. They perform throughout Regina, as do the school’s First Nation dancers.

Through these cultural practices, Mother Teresa Middle School provides its Indigenous students with the opportunity to celebrate their roots and their identity.

“Identity is very important to this age group,” says Whitestar, an Oskâpêwis (Elder’s Helper) in his community. “Allowing them to explore and experience their culture is in return allowing them to grow individually and holistically.”



the school year, accommodation can and will be made for any student’s additional spiritual needs in a way that is respectful of their own and other students’ backgrounds. It is the hope of all involved in Mother Teresa Middle School that all students will be exposed to a breadth of spiritual traditions and practices from all walks of life.

The concern for a holistic education is seen as part of a Jesuit-endorsed school’s mission ‘to develop men and women for others’, where **we will support our students of all cultural and faith backgrounds becoming hopeful, confident, morally responsible leaders for**

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### From Mother Teresa Middle School’s Statement on Reconciliation:

“MTMS is inspired by Catholic and Jesuit values according to the ‘Nativity’ school tradition and the spirit of reconciliation. **It operates inclusively, being open to a variety of cultural traditions and expressions of spirituality including Christian and Indigenous traditions. MTMS does not proselytize, or aim to ‘convert’ students of non-Catholic backgrounds.** While students will be expected to participate in lessons, ceremonial activities, and celebrations held throughout

**love and service of their families and communities.** MTMS will strive to encourage our students to become people who are loving, intellectually competent, open to growth, spiritually alive, and committed to doing justice. These five key aims are common to all Jesuit schools. MTMS will strive to create a school culture of individual care and concern for each student—where students feel they are known and cared for by their teachers, where they feel respected, and where they learn to respect themselves and others and learn a sense of responsibility for serving their community.”

# The MTMS Mentorship Program

Walking together

Maurice Laprairie, Q.C. is an accomplished lawyer in Regina and a skilled photographer. In 2011, he was looking for local charity he could help as a photographer. He was introduced to Mother Teresa Middle School.

In the school's second year, a mentorship program was introduced. Laprairie jumped at the chance to become the mentor for Dylan, then in grade seven and now 19-years-old and attending university.

Maurice Laprairie's beautiful photos adorn the hallways of Mother Teresa Middle School. But as a mentor, he sees an even bigger picture:

"When I first met Dylan he would walk two or three steps behind me, so I would slow down, but then he would fall behind again. Finally, I got annoyed and said: 'Why aren't you walking beside me?' And he said: 'Because I'm not as good as you are.' 'You are every bit as good as I am,' I said. 'Now get up here beside me!'"

Each MTMS student is paired with a mentor from the community. Someone to spend time with the student outside of school hours. A role model. A confidant. A voice of hope when life gets tough.

Laprairie was at the hospital when Dylan's grandmother passed away. He attended the funeral. He provided emotional support. Above all, he was simply *there*—present and focused on providing Dylan with the emotional support he needed.

Laprairie, like all MTMS volunteer mentors, is a champion for a young person who has faced significant challenges in life, but also possesses tremendous potential. MTMS mentors complement the school's nurturing, individualized approach to education as they seek to help the students achieve all that they can.

**"Children from privileged families have connections. Role models. People they can call. Networks of people they can aspire to be like. These kids don't really have that,"** says Laprairie. "That's why the mentorship program is so important."

Laprairie estimates that he and Dylan have been on hundreds of outings over the years, including Roughrider games, Pats games, bowling, movies, and simply hanging out.

**"I lost my father in 2007, so Maurice has been a father figure to me,"** says Dylan, now an education student at the University of Regina. "He inspired me to pursue my education and he's my biggest support."



Dylan and his mentor, Maurice Laprairie:  
"You are every bit as good as I am," I said.  
"Now get up here beside me!"



# Staffing for Excellence

Nurturing a culture of respect, excellence, and love

"I know a lot of excellent teachers, but not all of them are right for our school. **We hire on mission. We hire outliers.** Our people have had success in other areas, including athletics. Soccer, wrestling, basketball, hockey. Our people have been exposed to motivators and coaches. They know how to practise and how to work hard. They bounce back from defeat. Nothing fazes them. Our teachers are competitive people and they have been champions. **Teaching at Mother Teresa is their chance to win another championship. We give our teachers room to grow and excel and we've had zero turnover.**"

- Curtis Kleisinger, Executive Director

"Some of our kids test us, to see if we're still going to love them. And we do. We've had kids say: 'I don't believe you can love me this much.' Students and staff. **We belong to each other.**"

- Terri Cote, Principal



"We follow the kids right through to employment. We're learning, growing, and getting better each and every day. They become our friends and **I will care for them forever.**"

-Ron Gonzales, Director of Student Support/ Graduate Support Director

## MISSION

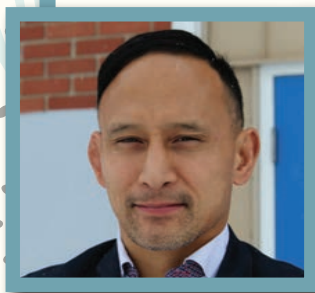
Through education and enrichment programs, Mother Teresa Middle School aims to break the cycle of poverty for disadvantaged youth in Regina.

## VISION

To graduate motivated and bright young men and women of character with the capacity to become post-secondary graduates, role models, and leaders in their communities.

## PHILOSOPHY

MTMS is built on the Jesuit idea of *cura personalis*—caring for the whole person. This includes tending to students' intellectual, social, physical, spiritual, and emotional needs.



“With all the other schools we’ve been with I’ve always had some concerns and I’ve always had things to say.

**The only thing I have to say to Mother Teresa Middle School is ‘thank you.’**

–Tony, foster dad of two former MTMS students, Tiondra and Ty



“Mother Teresa Middle School follows its students after they leave and lets them know that they’re not going to let them down. **Even though the students have challenges and sometimes they will stumble, the school still believes in them.** These kids will take that love with them throughout their lives and make the world a better place.”

–Elder May Desnomie, grandmother of a current MTMS student and an MTMS alumnus



“When Mother Teresa Middle School was talking about hiring me, they brought me in for a tour. I asked three students where they were from, meaning what reserve are they from. They couldn’t answer me and it literally broke my heart because I am so rooted in my Cree identity. How can they have a direction if they don’t know where they’re from?

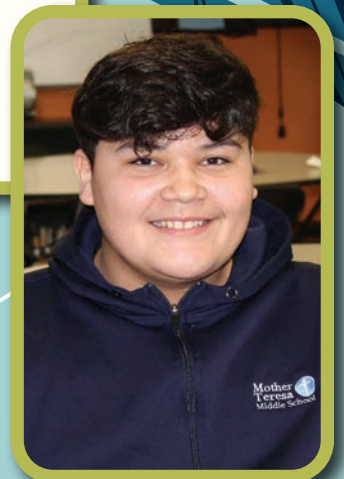
**That identity piece struck me and I felt I could make a difference here.”**

–Evan Whitestar, Student Service Assistant, Founder of the Buffalo Boys



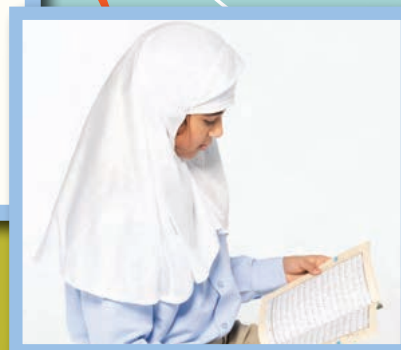
“I think people should know we’re not a normal school. **Our teachers really take one-on-one seriously.** They are really engaging. They’re loving and they’re caring. It’s probably the best experience I’ve ever had; the learning aspect alone is the best.”

– Kadence, Grade Eight Buffalo Boy Drummer



“We all pray to the same God. **I feel good and confident that she can pray at school.** Minahil (pictured) is safe and connected to God at Mother Teresa Middle School.”

– Maureen Siddiqui, mother of MTMS student





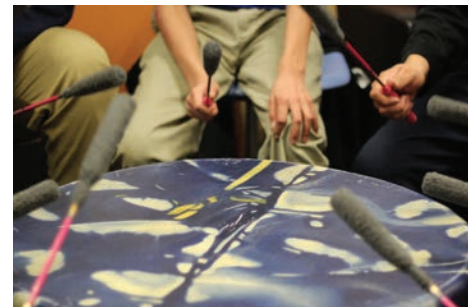
# Mother Teresa Middle School is a

Jesuit NativtyMiguel Academy

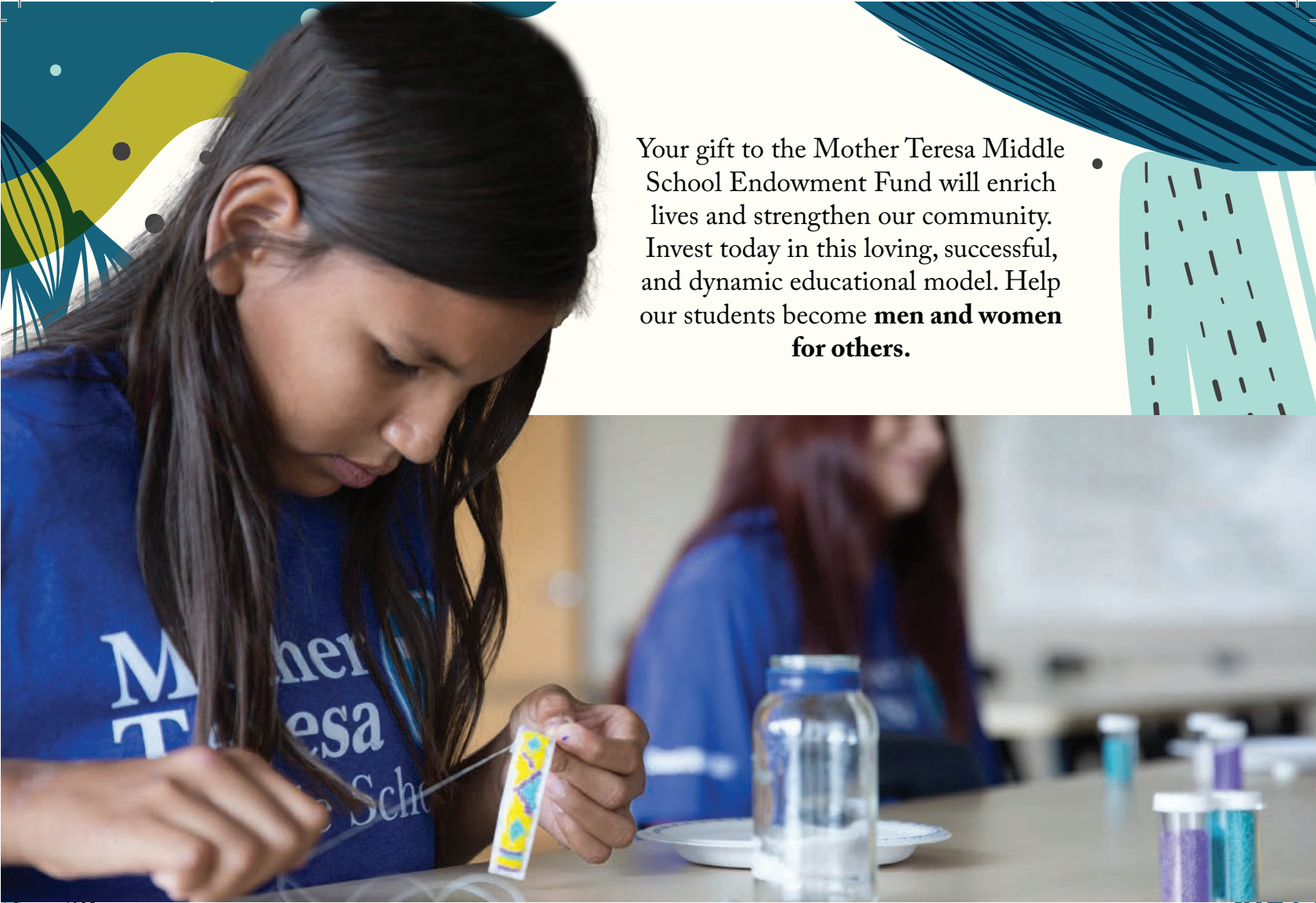
The NativtyMiguel Coalition comprises schools that are aligned in terms of mission, governance, core beliefs, and outcomes as detailed in the Coalition's Membership Identity framework. As such, member schools:

- Deliver an explicitly faith-based education
- Serve the economically-poor
- Employ an independent governance structure with effective leadership
- Support graduates beyond graduation
- Engage the family as partners
- Extend the school day and year
- Articulate a commitment to excellence
- Demonstrate proven, consistent results in the development of the whole child
- Are invested in the NativtyMiguel Coalition

Mother Teresa Middle School is one of 49 member schools in North America, including two in Canada.







Your gift to the Mother Teresa Middle School Endowment Fund will enrich lives and strengthen our community. Invest today in this loving, successful, and dynamic educational model. Help our students become **men and women for others.**

# Mother Teresa Middle School

A Jesuit Academy

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