



# ROUNDTABLE

NEWS AND VIEWS FOR AND FROM KNIGHTS

## MCS Board Moves Forward with Key Initiatives



*From left to right: Bishop Ryan P. Jimenez, Secretary Joe A. Pangelinan, Chair Vicente "Ben" Babauta, Vice Chair Jacqueline Che, previous chair, Joe Tajeron, and Treasurer Will Hunter*

Building on the momentum of continuing enrollment increases for five years now, Mount Carmel School' Board of Directors is moving forward with some key initiatives.

This past summer, the Board of Directors elected AlumKnight Vicente "Ben" Babauta to serve as its new chair. In accepting the position, Babauta expressed gratitude to outgoing chair, Joseph L. G. Tajeron, for his accomplishments as chair. Under Tajeron's leadership, the school launched several important initiatives. Headed by a leadership change four years ago, the school reversed a decade of enrollment decline, going from about 250 students to current enrollment projections of over 500. The school also improved its financial situation, rose scores on standardized tests, and switched to a new accreditation model. On top of that, Tajeron led the school board to give faculty and staff the first significant salary increase in over a decade.

One of the board's first priorities has been to relaunch the Save the Stage campaign, which will renovate and redesign the school's historic stage, where the CNMI Covenant and Constitution were deliberated and signed. The

campaign was placed on hold last school year as the school recovered from the devastation of Typhoon Soudelor. Now, the board is finalizing a Request for Proposals for the stage renovations, which will be released in the coming weeks.

The board is also excited to be working with the recently reconvened AlumKnight Association, chaired by AlumKnight Charles Cepeda. The Board aims to present designs and architectural renderings to the association's annual Night with the Knights Gala scheduled for Catholic Schools Week 2017.

In addition to relaunching the Save the Stage campaign, the board has also prioritized the development of a five year strategic master plan, which it intends to launch by 2017. Based on current work on the strategic master plan, it will cover six areas: Catholicity, school finances, teaching and learning, student support, facilities and resources, and supplemental programs.

The board is also focusing on ensuring the smooth transition of Sister Remedios Early Childhood Development Center into Mount Carmel School, which started this school year.

## Why Empathy Holds the Key to Transforming 21st Century Learning

by Thom Markham for Mind/Shift



Like other aspects of modern life, education can make the head hurt. So many outcomes, so much important work to do, so many solutions and strategies, so many variations on teaching, so many different kinds of students with so many different needs, so many unknowns in preparing for 21st Century life and the endless list of jobs that haven't been invented.

What if we discovered one unifying factor that brought all of this confusion under one roof and gave us a coherent sense of how to stimulate the intellect, teach children to engage in collaborative problem solving and creative challenge, and foster social-emotional balance and stability—one factor that, if we got right, would change the equation for learning in the same way that confirming the existence of a fundamental particle informs a grand theory of the universe?

That factor exists: It's called empathy.

To make that argument requires a deep dive into the profound nature of empathy. Right now, empathy roughly equates to "I like you and am willing to tolerate you regardless of differences because I am a good person." But the textbook definition hints at something more profound: It's 'the feeling of being able to understand and share another person's experiences and emotions.' That all-encompassing definition means empathy results from a complex mix of other meaningful emotions and attitudes that fuel human personality, such as openness, curiosity, self-restraint, vulnerability, sensitivity, awareness, respect, appreciation, and even love. Add this list to the fact that empathy can't manifest unless we have had our own experiences and emotions to contrast, compare, and connect with others—and we can see that empathy is more than a simple connector; it's the subterranean, fundamental glue that holds humanity together.

Thus, it shouldn't surprise us that such a potent emotion resonates across mind and body, influencing behavior and brain function. That is exactly the case. Empathy has the potential to open up students to deeper learning, drive clarity of thinking, and inspire engagement with the world—in other words, provide the emotional sustenance for outstanding human performance.

*Continued on back*

## Announcements

### Canned Food Drive

As in years past, we are encouraging students to practice the virtue of almsgiving by bringing non-perishable food items, traditionally referred to as canned food, for offering during the Thanksgiving Mass. Each homeroom will bring up their collected items during the Presentation of the Gifts and we hope and trust that all students will help give to those in need. In particular, this year's canned food drive will go towards Karidat and the Salvation Army.

## In the Future

**Thanksgiving Mass/Meal**  
Wednesday, November 23  
12:00 noon dismissal

**Thanksgiving Break**  
November 24–25

## Sports Calendar

**Cross Country Finals**  
TOMORROW,  
Saturday, November 19, 7:00 am  
Lau Lau

**CCOPSA Middle School Volleyball Semi-Finals**  
Monday, November 21  
MCS1 vs GCA1 @GCA at 3:30 pm

**CCOPSA High School Volleyball**  
Tuesday, November 22  
MCS2 Girls vs Agape Girls @Agape at 3:30  
MCS1 Girls vs GCA Girls @MCS at 3:30  
MCS1 Boys vs GCA Girls @MCS at 4:30

## ESLR of the Week

**#4. Show leadership by being active participants within the community.**

## Empathy

*continued from front*

I see this regularly in my work with project-based-learning teachers who create classrooms that hum with good vibes and focused work. But to understand the full potential of empathy, let's connect some dots. Those dots may appear unrelated at the moment, but they constitute a scatterplot with a trend line, predicting that empathy will eventually not be an add-on or 'soft' skill or one component of a middle school advisory program, and in the process confirm that a school system focused on cognition and testing alone cannot bring forth the greater purpose, focus, collaboration, and creativity necessary for 21st century students. I see seven 'dots', if you will, that begin to paint this emerging picture of schooling in the future:

### Empathy underlies collaboration

As social-emotional learning becomes more necessary to help students navigate life and work, empathy is getting more popular by the day, for good reason: Empathy lies at the heart of 21st century skillfulness in teamwork, collaboration and communication in a diverse world. Speaking or listening to someone without radiating empathy narrows the channel of communication or blocks connection altogether. Particularly in the new reality of a global world, without empathy you're not ready to engage the 21st century, either in the workplace or across cultures. It has to be taught, practiced and coached.

Empathy is healthy. In the last twenty years, discussions about emotions have taken a radical turn. For years, negative emotions dominated theory and research. Today we know that positive emotions enhance well-being, health, relationships and personal strengths. At the top of this pyramid are the emotions associated with empathy: curiosity, openness, appreciation and gratitude. Empathy simply powers up the mind, body and spirit.

### Empathy promotes whole-child learning

A critical dot, overlooked in our brain-centric world, is that empathy may activate the heart. As I've written many times, the heart has a role in learning equal to the brain. In fact, science does not support the mistaken notion that the brain does all the work. Research on heart rate variability and emotions shows that the heart engages the brain in constant conversation, using the language of emotions to direct the 'state' of the brain. To perform its role, the heart contains upwards of 40,000 neurons identical to nerve cells in the brain; eighty percent of nerve traffic then travels upward from heart to brain, making it clear that the heart influences brain function. While we don't fully understand the implications of this partnership, two findings have been confirmed: Anxiety and negative feelings alter the coding of the messages sent by the heart to the brain, resulting in stress or fight or flight responses; at the same time, positive emotions such as gratitude and appreciation—close cousins of empathy—show pronounced, positive effects on brain processes.

### Empathy 'opens' us up

The frontal lobes of the brain, at least as much as we know now, are the seat of planning, execution, problem solving and creativity—and when the frontal lobes are working well, so are we. In that well-documented 'flow state,' humans function at their peak, moving into a whole-body feeling of openness, relaxed focus, and creative possibility. If we know empathy activates the frontal lobes, why can't we imagine intentional lessons about empathy and openness designed to put students in an optimal state for learning?

### Empathy powers up inquiry and project based learning

Instruction is clearly headed in the direction of student-centered approaches such as inquiry and PBL. These approaches succeed in an atmosphere of care and positive relationships, both between student and teacher, and student and student. Classrooms that lack this foundation cannot succeed at project based work or open-ended questioning that relies on students' ability to care about their learning. Setting up a culture of care is very much an exercise in making empathy central to daily work.

### Empathy triggers creativity

Beyond rounding out the skills of collaboration and communication, empathy, design and collaboration are interconnected pieces of the creative puzzle. Empathy is now identified as the first step in the design process, whether crafting new software for a user or creating form-factors that inherently please the

consumer. Right now, empathy is described as 'step.' But that easy designation belies a very deep process in which a designer must, for lack of a better term, 'sink into the mind of another and take on their persona'. That is a deep descriptor of an ultimate form of empathy—and it may be a necessary component of an educational system increasingly tilted toward design and inquiry.

### Empathy unites

The list could have started here, but on a planet that is now close to completing the globalizing process, empathy assumes a special role as the key emotion critical for seven-plus billion people to live in harmony and cooperative relationship. For our Stone-Age brethren, fear and separation were appropriate mechanisms for survival. But that has been flipped by sheer numbers, technology, resource scarcity, and environmental impact. Empathy is required curriculum, and without it, eventually our current focus on high test scores and fulfilling college requirements will be rendered meaningless by untoward events.

The takeaway? Ready or not, education is entering an age in which social learning is the new norm. Pure academics are giving way to increased opportunities for students to work together; teachers increasingly take on the role of co-learner and facilitator; listening, learning, and teaming are the new core skills. At the heart of this new skillfulness for everyone is the ability to forge deep connections lead to creative problem solving and positive pursuits. Taken all together, this makes empathy critical to schools. In fact, very soon we will need to invent a new taxonomy of learning that makes empathy the base of the learning pyramid.

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*Empathy lies at the heart of 21st century skillfulness in teamwork, collaboration and communication in a diverse world.*

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