

MARYVALE

Ms. DeLancey's August 2024 Blog: Welcome to the New School Year!

Every new school year is a blank slate. This moment is open to so many possibilities. It's the beginning of our new journey, our new chapter, together. Right now, we're at the beginning of our journey; we've just opened our book. We're going to fill our blank pages each day in ways we can only imagine right now.

As the daughter and granddaughter of teachers, I learned as a little girl that the first day of school is one of the best days of the year. I can't wait to see all of our students tomorrow and hear about their summer break adventures!

We were very busy this summer creating new learning spaces on campus. The Mitchell Leadership Lab has been updated to an entire wing on the first floor of the castle. The lower level of the castle has been transformed into a brand-new STEAM space, and four new classrooms were added across campus. Our facilities team did a tremendous job managing these projects. Our Board's Facilities Committee helped to design the spaces and worked on cost-effective ways to complete these key projects. I'm very grateful for all who made sure we are ready for tomorrow.

Two key summer initiatives are creating a better Maryvale community: Folio Collaborative, a Cloud-based growth, goal-setting, and evaluation tool for all employees including me; and a Board summer retreat to develop our upcoming strategic plan. Coming off last year's Association of Independent Maryland Schools accreditation, we have a great foundation and wonderful recommendations for our plan.

This summer, we launched our [Middle Grades Partnership](#) (MGP) with [City Springs Elementary/Middle School](#), a Baltimore City public charter school. I serve on the MGP board and am delighted that Maryvale students and teachers are also working with this nonprofit that partners Baltimore independent schools with public schools. For six weeks, we hosted about 25 City Springs middle school girls and boys on our campus with twelve of our rising sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students.

The beauty of MGP is that it really focuses on building relationships. Students and teachers work side-by-side from the two school communities. Carole Gonzalez, our science department chair, served as our MGP site director and planned a great STEM-centered program. The students did stream studies at our pond, identified various plants, and learned about climate change. The cooking classes were very popular, and City Springs' P.E. teacher created fun ways for the kids to interact through games and physical activities. In English class, they wrote their very own children's books.

We'll be continuing MGP programs throughout the year, which is critical to Maryvale's faith commitment to service and the hallmarks of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. This year, we are focused on the following hallmark, "We educate for and act on behalf of justice, peace, and care for all creation."

Over the last month, our faculty and staff returned to campus, rested and ready for new possibilities. (I am resisting using "relaxed" to describe my summer since my twins began driver's education last month.)

How will I be filling my blank pages in my second year as Maryvale President? With as much love, joy, excellence, integrity, and inclusion as I can. My biggest takeaway from my first year at Maryvale is to lean into living by and making decisions through those personal ideals.

I encourage you to think about what words and questions inspire you.

My questions are rooted in how welcomed I was last year and the wonderful relationships I continue to develop with our school's different constituents. How much good can I do for our students this year? How much good can I do for Maryvale? How much good can we do for Baltimore?

When challenges arise this year, and they will, I am going to be even more committed to living my ideals and questions. It's one of my key messages this year to our community. I've asked our faculty and staff to join me in finding ways to model our unique ideals – and voice them – to students.

For students who join us this year, your question might be, "Will I fit in?" As the "new girl" last year, I know firsthand how quickly you'll find your place and make friends. Here, you're taken into the fold immediately.

One of my personal goals for the fall is to help our community navigate discussions around the presidential election. We are having workshops for employees and students on the topic of civil discourse and listening with CloseUp, a national organization that works with schools all over the country. Learning how to talk to others with whom you disagree is integral to The Maryvale Way – Respect, Dignity, and Inclusivity. This fall is a chance to practice this in a very real way.

Many seniors will be voting for the first time on November 5th. We have a responsibility as a girls' school intentionally focused on leadership development to help our students be agents of civil discourse and respectful of various viewpoints. We want Maryvale students and alumnae to know how to share their voice in a way that helps the process and doesn't add to negativity.

This year, we're celebrating a very important milestone– the 10th anniversary of the [Patricia J. Mitchell '65 Leadership Institute](#). You'll hear a lot more about our wonderful event schedule from Laura Scott, Director of the Mitchell Leadership Institute. Maryvale is the first school in the region to create a formal academic and experiential leadership program and a Leadership Certificate program. Our leadership curriculum is part of every student's Maryvale experience.

Last year, I shared in my [Maryvale blog](#) the equation I developed 12 years ago to guide my work in inclusion and belonging: Empathy Reflex (ER) + Growth Mindset (GM) = Bridge Builder (BB). As a person of faith, it's steeped in the knowledge that we are one body as God's church and are called to care for one another.

I think about all the incredible opportunities – our blank pages – to embrace this equation. I can't wait to see the many ways our students will learn, discover, and support one another. More than anything, I am excited to experience how our community builds bridges this year here at Maryvale and with the larger Baltimore community.

I am already filled with love and joy just thinking about it. Here's to a wonderful year!