

Q&A about Mercy McAuley High

1. *Who made this decision and why?*

The elected Leadership Team of the Sisters of Mercy – South Central Community made this decision after months of intense study, prayer and reflection. Those deliberations included looking at as many possibilities for these two schools as we could imagine.

Without question, both schools have long, proud traditions of offering strong academics and graduating thousands of young women who have gone on to serve their Catholic faith, their communities and their families.

As stewards of these schools, we've taken an in-depth look at current enrollment trends and projections for the next 10 years based on Catholic baptisms and girls enrolled in Catholic elementary schools. After carefully weighing that information and other factors, we believe the best way to provide affordable and sustainable Catholic, Mercy education for young women in Cincinnati is to create a new school from the best of the two. To ensure that education remains truly robust, it's necessary for us to adapt to the times in which we live—in this case, declining enrollment.

2. *Aren't you essentially closing Mother of Mercy and transferring its students to McAuley?*

No, we're creating a new school—Mercy McAuley High—by blending the best of Mercy and McAuley.

3. *You say you'll blend the best of each school at Mercy McAuley High School. Can you give some examples?*

One example is McAuley's "Women In" program, which introduces students to medicine, law, engineering, and technology. Also, Mother of Mercy has an excellent Leading Scholars Program that supplements its rigorous advanced placement instruction.

Each school has a partnership with the University of Cincinnati School of Technology, allowing students to take college-level courses, and that program will continue. In addition, Mercy McAuley's healthy enrollment will create a

platform to expand programs beyond the current outstanding offerings at each of the two schools.

4. *Will financial aid be available at Mercy McAuley High?*

Yes, and any financial aid that's been awarded to a student will follow her to the new school.

5. *What about students who received financial aid offers from other schools for the coming year but turned them down?*

We want to emphasize that all financial aid at Mother of Mercy and at McAuley will remain in place for the 2017-2018 school year and will transfer to the new school in fall 2018. The high-quality education each school offers in the Catholic, Mercy tradition will continue as always for the coming year, and we firmly believe Mercy McAuley will offer the "best of the best" when it opens. Having said that, we understand some parents and students may wish to explore other options, and if so, we'll do our best to work with those families and schools to help students enroll where they believe their needs will be met.

6. *Will students who play sports at Mercy or McAuley be able to participate at Mercy McAuley?*

Yes, students will maintain their eligibility.

Having said that, the transition committee will address details of athletic programs at Mercy McAuley High School, and students may be required to try out. We'll work hard to ensure that all students who are interested have an opportunity to play.

7. *Will Mercy McAuley provide transportation for students?*

We'll certainly explore the possibility of offering that service if it's important to parents.

8. *What about staffing of the two schools? Will there be layoffs because of duplication?*

Throughout this process, we've been concerned about the people who have devoted their lives to Mercy secondary education in Cincinnati. Creating a school that is truly new will require the very best staff, and throughout the selection process, we'll make every effort to treat everyone fairly and justly.

For 2017-2018, both schools will continue to operate for the most part as they are now. That means staffing will be based on the needs of the individual schools.

In fall 2018, we'll launch the new school—Mercy McAuley—and its staffing also will be based on student needs. It's too soon for us to know what those staffing requirements will be.

Throughout this transition, we're committed to keeping the faculty and staff updated as information becomes available so that you can make the best decisions for your career and family.

9. *If faculty and staff lose their positions, how much notice will they receive?*

In general, you can expect staffing decisions will be made as they are every year between March and April. In all cases, our goal is to treat everyone fairly and justly.

10. *Will faculty and staff who are laid off receive severance packages?*

We don't know at this point.

11. *Who will be principal of the new school?*

Selection of a principal for Mercy McAuley High School is, of course, an important decision and needs to be considered carefully. The Mercy McAuley Transition Committee will develop a process to secure the best person, based on the school's vision, mission and goals.

12. *Will there be a president?*

Yes, we believe the president/principal model will best serve Mercy McAuley.

13. *Why are you closing Mercy instead of McAuley?*

McAuley's building is newer (57 years old) and needs fewer updates. The Mercy building, although beautiful, is more than 100 years old and needs significant improvements.

Over the years, we've addressed all essential issues and those related to health and safety at the Mother of Mercy campus. However, we also have supported the school's leadership in making financial aid to students a priority. We want to give girls in Cincinnati an opportunity to be steeped in the Catholic faith and in the spirit of Mercy, and for many families, financial aid is key.

Because of enrollment issues, Mother of Mercy hasn't had the financial resources to make extensive renovations while also keeping that commitment to financial aid.

14. *What will happen to the Mother of Mercy building?*

We'll conduct a study to determine the future of the building and property and will ask a committee to undertake that work for us. In the meantime, we'll maintain the building and secure it as necessary. We want to preserve its historic features and artifacts in some way, but those decisions haven't been made yet.

15. *What about the impact on the surrounding neighborhood?*

We recognize that the Mother of Mercy High School campus is an integral part of that neighborhood, and the Sisters of Mercy will do their best to address its future in a timely manner by appointing a committee to study the matter and make recommendations. As part of its work, the committee will seek input from neighbors and area leaders and will take the potential impact on the neighborhood into consideration in making recommendations regarding the building and property.

16. *What about McAuley's history?*

We're looking to McAuley's community—faculty and staff, students, alumnae, families, and donors—to help us ensure that the spirit and history of McAuley High School continue to thrive. In addition, we anticipate that our transition committee will plan creative opportunities for both schools to celebrate and recognize their histories.

17. *What will Mercy McAuley's capacity be? Can the facility accommodate the current enrollment of both schools?*

Yes, the building on Oakwood Avenue can handle the combined enrollment of the two schools with room for significant growth.

18. *What will the new school's mascot and school colors be? And what about uniforms at Mercy McAuley?*

Those decisions will be handled by the transition committee, with input from the school communities and the principal and president. We're looking forward to broad-based local representation—including students, faculty and staff, alumnae, and others—in addressing those issues and others, such as curriculum, athletics, transportation, and campus ministry.

19. Why are you waiting until fall 2018 to make this change?

Although planning already is underway, we believe an 18-month period is essential for us to prepare for the smooth opening of Mercy McAuley High School. That includes developing curriculum and programs and securing topnotch administration and staff.

Eighteen months of planning also makes it possible to obtain plenty of input from students, parents, faculty, and alumnae.

20. Is this happening because Mercy Education Collaborative of Cincinnati failed to run the two high schools well?

No, we're grateful to the board members and staff of MECC for their contributions and wisdom and for their continuing hard work during this transition. Since MECC was established in 2013, we've had an additional three years to study the schools and the external realities affecting them (primarily declining enrollment.) With that information now in hand, we believe that one school, Mercy McAuley High School, offers the best option for the future of Catholic, Mercy education for young women in Cincinnati. MECC gave us the wisdom and experience to come to this bold decision.

21. Why do you believe the new school will succeed?

Thousands of graduates are a testament to the success of these two schools, and a century from now, we hope additional generations of girls will receive education in the Mercy tradition in Cincinnati.

Healthy enrollment creates a platform for expanding curriculum and programs, and we expect the new Mercy McAuley High School to thrive. By becoming one school, we'll fulfill the aspirations of affordability and sustainability for the long term, while carrying forward our mission of excellence in the tradition of the Sisters of Mercy.