

Saint John XXIII Catholic School

Catholic School Improvement Program

January 18 - 23, 2017

Review Purpose – through the perspective of the principles of the “7 Characteristics of a Catholic School”:

1. To provide the school information that can be used to support continuous improvement.
2. To celebrate the successes and strengths of the school.
3. To enhance capacity in the school and promote a culture of excellence.
4. Validation of what Elk Island Catholic is doing for continuous ongoing improvement.
5. Reinforcing that Catholic Education is our number one responsibility.

Commentary

Saint John XXIII Catholic School provides programming for Brighter Beginnings age 3 – to Gr. 4 students of Fort Saskatchewan. It is a large school with a student population of 433 students, 26 teachers and 16 support staff. The review consisted of personal interviews with students, parents, staff as well as quantitative surveys of students, staff and parents. The review was conducted by Don Marceau, Division Principal, Clint Moroziuk, Director of Human Resources, Joe Kucy, Principal and Shawn Haggarty, Deputy Superintendent. Saint John XXIII has a new admin team, the Principal and Assistant Principal are each in their first year of their designation. The school has experienced a high degree of admin change in the past few years.

With the success of the school, the parents of the community are choosing to send their children to Saint John XXIII; this success creates challenges in class size and availability instructional spaces.

Commendations

The parents spoke repeatedly of the warm welcoming family atmosphere that they feeling within Saint John XXIII.

One parent was quoted as saying that the best feature of the school is the Morning Prayer and the message from Mrs. Melnyk, she said ‘it touches my heart.’

It is evident that the prayer life of the school is vibrant and embedded. Every staff member shared that prayer is always at the forefront and part of every gathering.

The admin are new to their role and are trying hard to be the best that they can be. A staff member shared how impressed she is that she can go to Admin with any concern and that they delve into it. This is really appreciated.

100% of staff surveyed feel that Saint John XXIII is a warm, welcoming Christ-centered place.

Admin are conducting walk-throughs, they pop in and out of classrooms to see the instruction that is occurring.

The 'Principal's Pick' program is a positive way of promoting literacy. Tracy reads a different book each month to a class. The students really look forward to this interaction, it builds positive relationships throughout the school.

Staff feel that professional development is a priority, an expectation is in place that PD is to be aligned to the staff members PGP. Tracy and Sandy work hard to ensure that equitable PD is available to the various staff members.

PD funds are available but staff are not completely clear on the allocation or funding limits. Staff have a general awareness of how PD monies are allocated. They shared that an equitable distribution of the funds is something that Admin tries to do.

100% of parents surveyed are satisfied with the overall quality of the Religious Education program.

Student participation in service projects is promoted throughout the school. A staff member shared that 'we plant the seed and the students run with the service work.' The SLS – Student Leadership Squad' helps develop leadership skills in the students; they serve a strong role within the school. This has been a positive addition and is valued by the students; giving them a voice and an opportunity for leadership.

Service projects have included, food bank drives, mittens drive, singing for the residents of Turner Lodge, the Giving Tree, fund raising for the refugee family, bake sales. A service goal is included in the School Assurance Plan.

97% of students, 97.5% parents and 100% of staff are satisfied that Saint John XXIII embodies the teachings of Jesus Christ

The process used in the development of the Assurance Plan is one for other schools to adopt. A collaborative activity was used that sought the input of the staff and parents. This input was used to help develop the Assurance Plan. As one staff member shared, 'staff had a voice and felt that their input was heard.'

The students expressed loudly that they like and appreciate the staff.

The SLS Squad has been listed by the students as one of the best things about Saint John XXIII; the fun day with OLA was noted as being a positive experience.

Students spoke about prayer being important within the school.

Staff develop professional growth plans and then meet with Admin to share. The PGP is to include a faith goal and a learning goal. Staff shared that their PD is to align with their PGP. It was also expressed that many staff try to align their PGP to the School and Divisional goals. A fall and spring review process of the PGP is in place.

Staff expressed that resources and support are consistently offered as long as funds are available.

Frequent admin walk-throughs are occurring, the administration is present in the classrooms.

100% of students surveyed stated that religion is an important part of the school.

The work of Scott Walker, the Chaplin, is much appreciated. The collaborative ties between the three schools in Fort Saskatchewan and with the OLA Parish is very positive.

The students attend Mass at the OLA Parish as a whole school twice a year. (Thanksgiving and Easter)

Staff expressed that they appreciate it when Father visits the school for celebrations, however they expressed that they would like Father to spend more time with them in their classes.

The yearly division faith themes seem to be very well received by the staff. They repeatedly shared that the yearly faith theme provides a focus for the Division and assists them in 'sharing the Good News' with their students.

Staff know and recognize the Superintendent as he is present in the school from time to time.

Justine Wright, the local trustee, is present and visible at the school. This presence and the promotion of the school is appreciated by the staff.

The new format of the students leading morning prayers over the intercom reinforces the importance of prayer. This format is appreciated by staff.

94.5% of students surveyed stated that they are receiving a high quality education.

When asked about permeating our faith into instruction, one staff member shared that, 'we teach in a culture of faith, it is not what you teach, it is how you teach.' This is the true essence of permeation.

It is clearly understood that there is an expectation from the Board and Superintendent that as a staff member, that your faith be deepened; authenticity is important.

100% of the students surveyed know that the staff and administration want them to be the best that they can be.

A staff member stated, "Our leadership are very present and involved. Kids don't see them in the office, they see them in the hallways and the classroom. 'Principal Picks' helps the Principal connect with the kids. The students get to know her, she gets to know them. Sandy and Tracy are eager to get into the classroom. They assist me in my role. Our Admin team really listen to our needs, they really get it."

The values imparted by the school to the students was stated by a parent as being one of the best things about Saint John XXIII, she followed up by saying, 'I can see it in my child's behavior.'

In response to the question, what would be one thing that would make Saint John XXIII even better, a student shared that, "this school is already better!"

The Division wide theme of 'Altar'd in Faith' is evident throughout the school in displays and is promoted during assemblies and celebrations. Staff spoke positively of the Division themes and how they focus the EICS community.

97.5% of staff are satisfied that the school leadership and staff demonstrate that Christian values are important.

The culture of Catholicity is very evident in the school. Prayer corners and displays are present throughout the classrooms. The Chapel is a focal point for the school and is a great place for staff to bring their students for prayer.

The contributions of the Chaplaincy position over the last two years has been noted as having a powerful impact on the faith life of the school. The supports provided to staff have been invaluable.

Recommendations

The once a month frequency and the scheduling of the Faith Assemblies was brought up as a concern by some students and staff. Some expressed interest in possibly increasing the frequency of the Faith Assemblies. The Faith Assembly is a highlight and provides a cohesive faith opportunity for students, parents and staff. This may be something to consider.

There are advantages to the Chaplin providing Religion instruction to specific classes, however, a number of staff shared that they do not teach Religion to their homeroom students. One stated that, 'teaching religion to my students is an integral part of what I do. Now it is somewhat compartmentalized and it makes it more difficult to provide cross-curricular faith permeation among the other subjects.'

Admin may consider a shared teaching role of the religion program by the homeroom teacher in conjunction with the Chaplin. This model allows for continuity of permeation between the teacher and their students as well as sharing the strengths of the Chaplin with the students of Saint John XXIII.

Challenge – 'To Continue With the Goal'

Permeation – We are pleased to share that every staff member expressed that they work to permeate faith into all their classes. Saint John XXIII is first and foremost a Catholic School; staff are called to be

witnesses of Christ in every interaction they have. Permeation of our Catholic faith is non-negotiable and an expectation for all. We encourage you to continue to find opportunities to share the 'light of Christ' with your students and be witnesses.

Final Quote

As a staff member shared:

'We do Catholic very well here, students come from public schools and they say wow!'

