

St. Luke Catholic School

Catholic School Improvement Program

November 18 – 21, 2013

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

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

- Small school challenges, balance between providing extensive opportunities, and the number of staff to supervise these activities. ‘Can’t do it all.’
- Combined grades was mentioned as a necessity but not an optimum situation for student learning.
- Families choose to live in a country setting but with that come the challenges, some mentioned that bussing conflicts with participation in afterschool activities but would like more afterschool opportunities. It is difficult for a small school to compete with the opportunities in a larger school but would not be willing to sacrifice the benefits of a small school for a larger school.

Commendations

- Strong Accountability Pillar Results, notably the Continuous Improvement measure that shows such strong improvement and the Acceptable Standard that showed tremendous improvement.
- Students all spoke about the supports and encouragement they receive from their teachers.
- Accountability Pillar results reflect the Safe and Caring feeling within St. Luke.
- Students, parents and staff spoke about the family atmosphere within the school.
- The Citizenship component is being actualized within the school. The students feel that they are a part of the school; they feel they are being listened to.
- Students are not afraid to ask questions within their classes.
- Effective Growth, Supervision and Evaluation practices are evident, staff repeatedly shared that administration is regularly in the classroom sharing practice.
- Praise & Worship Assembly -
- The Culture of Catholicity within the school is very evident in the building. Prayer corners and displays throughout the school are front and center. Faith ‘is felt’ throughout the school.
- Parents expressed that they feel invited to attend the Praise and Worship Assemblies and that the growth and development of their child’s faith life and academic progress is occurring.
- Parents spoke about the positive nurturing environment within the school.
- Professional Growth Plans are an effective tool that is well supported by administration.

- The Instructional Mass by Fr. Jack was a big success, it was noted that Father Dan spent a lot of time within the school on a regular basis.
- APPLE Schools Initiative is being actualized.
- Notable commendation on how this young staff has come together and reflects such a warm inviting atmosphere. Staff all seems to be pulling in the same direction.
- Students feel that Teachers care, 'they are there to help whenever needed.'
- Students repeatedly shared that Teachers care," they want me to be the best that I can be."
- "All people are nice", bus drivers, teachers, support staff etc.
- "Small school makes it easier to know everyone and to get help"
- "We like the rules to keep us safe", the students have an understanding that the school rules are positive and there to support them.
- Parents like the small feel of the school, they expressed that 'everyone' knows each other; they feel connected to the school which provides a positive nurturing environment.
- Numerous parents spoke about the leadership opportunities with the older students working with the younger students. 'Garbage Buddy'
- The staff is very involved in the Parish life, music ministry, Eucharistic ministers, and children's liturgy.
- Staff feels that admin is very supportive and provides the necessary resources.
- APPLE School is lived, all stakeholders spoke to the benefits of the program and the benefits to the students. St. Luke is to be commended for the great work done with APPLE Schools over the years.
- School Council is active, relevant and supportive.
- Open door policy was mentioned repeatedly, the Administration is very approachable and personable.

Recommendations

1. **Service Projects** – Service projects are occurring but students don't always seem to get the connection between social justice and service. When prodded, students spoke about the various activities that they have done but did not make the connection to it being 'service'. Students and parents need to better understand the connection between service projects and social justice. To enhance this understanding, staff may consider some type of communication to students and parents that specifically shares the purpose of the project and the link to social justice.
2. **Articulation of the Professional Development plan and budget.** Many staff members shared that PD is supported by administration but did not seem to be aware that money is available to them for Professional Development. The comment, 'we know money is tight' was articulated multiple times.

We like the process that is in place which is that teachers provide a rationale for attending professional development that the PD aligns with the Teachers Professional Growth Plan, School's Improvement Plan, Division Plan and Alberta Ed.

In the past, much of the Professional Development was provided by AISI which is no longer in place. The Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium (ERLC) is an excellent resource for top notch local PD.

3. **PLC's - Professional Learning Communities Development**

Several staff mentioned that 'we don't do PLC's' or that 'we used to do them'. It is very hard to have a collaborative team when only one teacher teaches a particular grade. We observed a great deal of Collaboration occurring between staff members in the staffroom; conversations around field trips, coaching and the teaching of lessons. Morning prayer time and the sharing of announcements is a great example of collaboration that is occurring.

Collaboration can occur in many models:

- During a school day when a sub is brought in.
- Coming together for a short meeting afterschool
- Meeting collaboratively during PD days

In the new Collective Agreement, two days of Collaboration time has been set aside for each K-8 teacher. This will assist in the actualization of PLC's

The Division will continue to advocate for structuralized PD built into the school year.

Final Comment

From the interview with Fr. Jack Hamilton.

"St. Luke is a beacon for Catholic Education, it has been blessed to have such a strong Catholic leader in Michael Smith, the staff is doing a top notch job."