



Our Lady of Angels Catholic School

Catholic School Improvement Program

Jan. 15-18, 2019

Review Purpose – through the perspective of the principles of the “Five Marks of an Excellent 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

Our Lady of the Angels Catholic School serves Pre K- Gr 4. students in Fort Saskatchewan and the surrounding area. The school consists of 187 students, 12 teachers and 11 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 Paul Corrigan, Assistant Superintendent, Jim Salsbury, Principal and Don Marceau, Retired Principal. OLA is in the first year of operation as a Pre-K to 4 school, having moved into a building that had previously served as a middle school for many years.

Commendations

- Staff commented that the administration in the school are present, available, supportive and approachable. One staff member commented, "I just feel so supported here. I get excited driving to work. There is great community here."
- One teacher commented that, staff here really try to "light up" every kid we interact with"
- Teachers expressed satisfaction with the depth of the new Religion resource, with some concern about the ability to engage all of the material.
- Staff gathering for prayer every morning is a best practice, a fantastic way to begin each day.
- Parents are extremely involved in the school, even volunteering to assist with the Jr. Options program of the school.
- Several staff students and parents commented on the warm and helpful manner of the Secretary, setting a great tone for the entire school. One staff member called her "the hands and feet of Christ."
- Starting the year with a faith based team building retreat has paid great dividends in setting the right path for establishing a culture of connections in the school.
- One teacher commented "We all didn't know who we were going to be. We worked hard to establish connection and relationship... the idea that we all matter." #ImagoDei!
- A staff member commented, "Relationships are the way in which God shows himself in the world, we are related."
- The staff are to be commended on the physical artifacts of faith in their classrooms and the public spaces of the school. While there are a few areas that need crucifixes, there are perhaps no other schools within EICS that seem to have so fully integrated our faith theme into their regular practice.
- A parent commented that her children "come home and are teaching me in the faith."
- As was mentioned by several parents, communication between school and home is excellent, the weekly communication to staff is a divisional best practice.
- 100% of staff and 100% of parents surveyed expressed satisfaction in the relationship with the parish. This is echoed in the comments of Father Kris, who expressed how impressed he was with the faith base of OLA, and was amazed at the Advent prayer celebrations that took place in the school.
- The regular Priest visits are a best practice and well received by the school community. It is imperative that all classes, including ECS and Pre-K have the opportunity to engage with the Priests.
- A student commented, "I think the best thing about the school is the religion and when all the teachers and staff worry about us and love us."
- Another student said, "it's a beautiful school and lots of fun."
- Faith leadership in the school evident from the Principal, Chaplain, and throughout the staff. Regular trips to the parish are a best practice.
- Teachers expressed satisfaction with the number of Religion classes scheduled per week.
- 94% of Staff indicated they are either satisfied or very satisfied with how the school embodies the teachings of Jesus Christ and how the celebrates its Catholic identity through celebrations, symbols, and other visible signs.
- 94% of Staff indicated they are either satisfied or very satisfied with how issues and concerns are adequately addressed.

- 100% of Staff indicated they are either satisfied or very satisfied that the school leadership and staff demonstrate that Christian values are important.
- 88% of Staff indicated that they are either satisfied or very satisfied with the direction the school is headed.
- Numerous staff mentioned that “They are here for each other and they foster the graces of the Holy Spirit”.
- Multiple comments that “My life here has become more personable, and that I really appreciate the smallness of our school”.

Recommendations:

Transition to a smaller school/embracing the opportunity: The Staff of Our Lady of the Angels has worked very hard in the last few months at creating a new and engaging faith centred culture for their community. The school has effectively transitioned from a large school environment to a small school environment, and the benefits of this change are apparent. This has not come without some difficulty however, as there are fewer staff available to cover all the bases and wear multiple hats. An opportunity exists to give staff some time to collaborate with colleagues while deepening the solid relationship with the parish. We recommend administration take multiple classes to daily mass at OLA parish on a regular basis, freeing up staff for some collaboration time.

Painting the Canvas: As mentioned above, the staff and community of OLA has built a remarkable faith centred, caring culture in a very short period of time. Now that the school year is half complete, the time has come to engage the community in visioning the future. We recommend the school begin the process of missioning and visioning, bringing together staff, perhaps even with an outside facilitator, to set goals, commitments, and focus areas for its future. This would involve not only the regular assurance program, but a focus of programming, social justice and community engagement. We recommend that this process begin with a focus on the faith centre of the school, the chapel. Centred on this community hub of faith, we believe it is time for OLA to begin the important process of capturing what the community is currently and what it can be.

‘A creation in progress’

Faith Integration – We are pleased to share that every staff member expressed that they work to integrate faith into all their classes. Our Lady of the Angels is first and foremost a Catholic School; staff are called to be witnesses to Christ in every interaction they have. Integration 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. OLA started the year as a blank canvas, which presented many challenges, but has been embraced as an opportunity to create a new Masterpiece.

Final Thought

A parent recounted a story of going to Christmas eve mass, which is outside of their normal practice. They shared that the family decided this year to attend Church during Christmas in large part due to the request of their child, a student at OLA, who wanted this to be a part of their Christmas experience.a true reflection of the good work being done at OLA!

