

Conclusion

The school is committed to making improvements to its academic programs, student organizations, and facilities. In the past three years, significant achievement has been made.

The success of the school starts with a strong vision, mission, and motto statements which engaged all stakeholder groups in their formation. The school community is committed to shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning. The commitment to these shared values is evident in documentation and decision making. Stakeholder feedback is accepted and actively sought. The school enjoys a high level of parent/community involvement. A strong collaboration exists between the school and the church. As a result the school is considered to be a vital part of the total church parish ministry.

The school strives to provide students with a quality education in a loving, welcoming atmosphere. Because of the small size of the school, each student is known on a deeply personal level. The class sizes are currently below state standards for non-public schools.

The teachers are committed to providing students with a quality education and are focused on increasing student achievement. A five year analysis of Terra Nova standardized testing results showed that students are performing in the third and fourth quartiles consistently at grade levels, across grade levels, and within subject areas. Even though the school was not as pleased with ACT Aspire test results, the students did score in a range that is comparable to other Archdiocesan schools located on the Westbank. This is the first year that the students were tested using ACT Aspire. This test is more rigorous and uses a different format from the Terra Nova standardized test. Current test data from ACT Aspire is being used as baseline data. Through interviews and survey results, parents confirmed that students are well prepared when they graduate. In the 2015 seventh grade graduating class, 100% of the students were accepted into a Catholic High School of their choice and 40% of those graduates received academic or leadership scholarships. In the graduating seventh grade class of 2016, 77% of those students chose to attend a Catholic high school for the 2016-2017 school year. Academic or leadership scholarships were awarded to 40% of those students. Students at Our Lady of Perpetual Help School attend Spanish classes from PK to seventh grade. Many of the former students have placed in advanced level Spanish courses in high school and have received invitations to join the Spanish Honor Society.

The faculty has implemented the use of Planbook Edu.com, an on line lesson plan generator, that is used to track state and national standards addressed in each lesson. The curriculum of the school is centered on advancing each student to the next level by first assessing where they are academically at the beginning of the year. In reading, students are given a baseline test to determine their reading levels. Students are reassessed throughout the year to monitor progress and make adjustments to the curriculum. Students are given cold reading passages in reading, social studies, and science to promote reading comprehension through nonfiction text. Students in the upper grades are given teacher created baseline tests to monitor progress within subject areas. Middle school math students are given the Sadlier-Oxford beginning of the year test to create a math baseline.

To encourage spiritual growth, students are actively involved as altar servers, participate in liturgical ministries and are assigned as prayer partners for Mass attendance. Students are encouraged to participate in organizations that foster team building, emotional support, and leadership roles. Team building skills are developed through a range of sports (football, basketball, baseball, softball, volleyball, cross country, and line dancing). Social/emotional skills are developed through a variety of academic organizations (academic games and Building Club), leadership opportunities (Safety Patrol and Student Council), and service clubs (4-H, American Heritage Girls, and Boy Scouts).

The pastor and the new principal have a strong visible presence in the school. The principal is a driving force behind many of the new educational initiatives at the school. The STEAM program is being implemented. The use of Bloom's Taxonomy and the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) question stem guide are used as a daily practice to promote higher order thinking skills. With the incorporation of DOK questioning techniques increases should occur on ACT Aspire standardized testing.

The school maintains on-going communication with all stakeholders. School Reach is used to deliver mass messages. Plus Portal allows parents to stay abreast of daily academic progress/grades. Semester progress reports and quarterly report cards are posted on Plus Portal and a paper copy is provided to those parents who may not have access to a computer to view the reports. The school has created a Facebook page to keep parents and the general public informed of school activities. Daily postings have been a great success. It serves as a public relations tool and allows parents to take a sneak peek into classroom learning. Parents are able to contact their child's teacher(s) using the email system set up by the Archdiocese. Classroom teachers have access to their class webpage and can update it regularly as a means of communication with parents. The counselor is available around the clock in the event that a crisis arises and counseling is needed.

Technological advances have been made at the school. Promethean Boards are in all classrooms. A class room set of iPads are available for teachers to check out and use as an additional resource. Interactive software for PK3, PK4, and Kindergarten is incorporated in learning centers and used daily. The computer lab has been updated. Additional Wi-Fi has been added along with an updated server.

Students are well behaved and attentive in classes as confirmed in the eleot observation ratings. The school has added a Positive Behavior Intervention and Support plan (PBIS) to support and encourage outstanding student behavior. The program allows students to earn "Hornet Bucks" which they can use to purchase privileges or items of their choice.

The greatest asset and the greatest challenge this school faces is its small size. Even though the small size allows for a great deal of personalization, it also presents a challenge. The school has to constantly explore ways to foster the continued growth of the school by increasing enrollment and academic performance. Increasing enrollment is an annual challenge due to the "A" rated public schools in Plaquemines Parish. The school has recently employed a Development Director whose primary duty is to serve as a community relations/marketing resource. The Director will also foster an open dialogue with respect to the needs of the students as they prepare to advance to different high schools throughout the metro area. The new position will

hopefully allow the school to be marketed to a broader audience.

The ACT Aspire standardized test has forced students to a more rigorous level of testing than the Terra Nova standardized test. The rigorous testing format is one that the students will have to adjust to in order to get true performance data. The school will need to adjust to the format and time constraints of ACT Aspire. To expose the students to this rigor, emphasis is being placed on higher order thinking questions and open response questions. Teachers are using Bloom's Taxonomy and Depth of Knowledge question stems guide in their daily practices to promote higher order thinking skills. They have also incorporated more multi-step evidence based questioning techniques across all grade levels.

The school has identified a need to improve the academic areas of writing, reading, and math. Writing portfolios are used to monitor students' progress. A common writing rubric is now being used across grade levels based on ACT Aspire requirements. The STEAM program was introduced this school year to better prepare students in science, technology, engineering, art, and math. The school is gathering baseline instructional data on all students. The middle school math class time has been increased by 15 minutes daily. The school also has indicated a need for an early childhood curriculum to be implemented. The early childhood team of PK3, PK4, and Kindergarten is working collaboratively to create a curriculum based on the state standards which best meets the needs of their students.

The school wants to incorporate more cooperative learning activities in their classrooms; but the old, traditional school desks do not lend themselves well to group work. The classroom furnishings need to be replaced with furniture that is more conducive to grouping arrangements.

The school is to be congratulated on its very low faculty and classroom turnover rate. At the same time, the school needs to be aware that eventually faculty members will start retiring, and the school does not have a formalized mentoring, coaching, and induction program. A program needs to be developed before it becomes a crisis issue.

After analyzing stakeholder feedback, the school determined that improvement is needed in counseling and support for students requiring social, emotional, and academic interventions. The school wants to be proactive in support for all students. In order to accomplish this goal, the counselor will need to create targeted support groups and meet with teachers/staff to determine success of interventions/group meetings/lessons. The counselor will also need to provide teachers with training on identification techniques to assist with student needs and to follow-up on implementation and effectiveness of interventions. This goal has time constraints since the counselor only works three days a week.

The school campus is very open. Some safety improvements have been made to protect the campus; however, more improvements are needed to be made especially concerning easy access to school buildings and outside restrooms.

The school has not finalized its Technology Plan. The completion of this plan is necessary because of recent technological upgrades and the acquisition of more technology. Without a current strategic plan, maximized use of technology will not be achieved.

The External Review Team has targeted three improvement priorities. The first addresses campus safety concerns expressed in stakeholder surveys and interviews. Even with the fencing between the neighborhood and the play area of the school, the school still remains a very open campus. Sign-in procedures are in place. Safety features have been added to the exterior buildings. However, more steps are needed to provide a truly safe campus.

The second priority addresses use of technology, professional development for the teachers in the use of these resources, and future technology purchases. In the past few years technological advances have occurred at the school. However, a strategic technology plan has not been finalized. This plan is needed to maximize use of present technology and to guide future purchases/upgrades.

The third priority is aimed at improving the counseling program and support services offered at the school. This is an area of concern expressed in interview sessions and in survey results. These services need to be reviewed and evaluated to make sure the needs of all students are being met.

This is a good school that prides itself on providing a nurturing supportive learning environment for all of its students. The school has great support from its stakeholders. A supportive relationship exists between the pastor and the principal. Both provide pro-active leadership. The school has a reputation for academic success. Graduates have done well in Catholic high schools across the metro area. The External Review Team congratulates this school on its past success and has faith that the student success will be even better after the implementation of action steps to address the three Improvement Priorities.

Improvement Priorities

The institution should use the findings from this review to guide the continuous improvement process. The institution must address the Improvement Priorities listed below:

- Address campus safety concerns expressed in stakeholder surveys and interviews.
- Develop a strategic technology plan which would address classroom use, professional development, and future purchases.
- Review and evaluate support services being provided to meet the academic, physical, emotional, and social needs of the student population.