

Can you hear the collective sigh of relief??? After 3 years of planning and preparing, our Accreditation visit is over! Our visiting team included Sheri Dishong, Associate Superintendent; Molly Doherty, Principal of St. James School; Mary Delac, Principal of Our Lady of Angels; and Jennifer Scanlon-Smith, Principal of Christ the King. The Team spent Monday and Tuesday visiting classrooms, talking to students, parents and teachers, inspecting our facility and reviewing our procedures. They focused on three main areas of interest; Catholic Identity, Instructional Domain and Institutional Domain. Excerpts of their report are included below.



I would just like to take this opportunity to say a sincere thank you to all those who helped St. Elizabeth School with the Accreditation process. From preparing all of the reports and paperwork, to cleaning and organizing the buildings and grounds, countless hours were dedicated to the process. For this, I am truly grateful. It is such a great feeling to have the Accrediting Team validate what I have always known – that the St. Elizabeth family is second to none. Thank you so much!

Sandy Nickel

Visiting Team Report for St. Elizabeth School

Date: October 27, 2009

Introduction

The accreditation team was warmly greeted by staff, parents, and students of St. Elizabeth School. Principal, Sandy Nickel, began the day, as she does all days, with morning announcements, “Savvy about Saints” questions, prayer, and Pledge of Allegiance. We then participated in the all school Mass led by the sixth grade class. The students were very respectful and “dressed up” for Mass (boys in white shirts/ties and girls in jumpers), which is required each week. At the end of Mass Mrs. Nickel dismissed the students by class while incorporating prayers and prayer intentions as classes exited out of the church. The community atmosphere and acceptance of each other as a child of God was evident from the moment we entered the building. As one third grader wrote, “It is a good place to learn because we get to be ourselves”.

Catholic Identity

Commendations:

- Prayerful atmosphere: Prayer is an essential part of the school environment. Beyond the usual and expected prayers of a Catholic school, prayer is used to address the cares and worries of students and staff making their Catholic faith an integral component of the school community.
- Uniform Code for boys and girls for the celebration of Mass: Boys in ties and girls in skirts or jumpers makes the statement that the celebration of the Eucharist is holy, sacred and deserving of students' personal best in dress.
- The school-wide integration of "Christskills" is authentic and deeply ingrained in the school's culture by students, staff, administration and parents.

Instructional Domain

Commendations:

- The dedication, knowledge, high expectations, and positive leadership provided by the principal, Mrs. Nickel, has contributed greatly to creating a school culture of positive faith formation and academic excellence by building a partnership of parents, staff, and students.
- Faculty is dedicated to lifelong learning. This is evident through the various staff development that takes place. This priority is essential if students are to receive the latest advances in curriculum and instruction. In order for staff to implement a strong academic program, they must be open to continuous improvement with regards to the teaching and learning process.
- Absence of threat is clearly a school-wide priority for the learning environment. Students feel safe and cared for, and parents expressed a high comfort level regarding their children's safety at school. The detail in the arrival/dismissal procedures is one example of how the staff views this as a priority as well.

Institutional Domain

Commendations:

- The principal provides exemplary leadership that allows the school to function like "a well oiled machine." Mrs. Nickel is well respected and inspires others to succeed.

- Mrs. Nickel is a visionary who leads school improvement, engaging all the stakeholders in the process.
- The school prioritizes child centered classrooms that promote safe and secure learning for all students. The facility is orderly and promotes a healthy learning environment with a wide range of services for the students (i.e. resource room, specials, after-care program, band).
- Through the implementation of the Love and Logic Discipline philosophy greater respect for all persons has increased throughout the building while improving the climate of the school. This program's parent component is utilized and is a required class for all new parents to the school.
- St. Elizabeth School should be recognized for their outdoor classroom and new playground that allow for additional brain-based learning opportunities.
- The school maintains and incorporates clear lines of communication with the teachers and the families through such resources as Sycamore Education.
- St. Elizabeth School has a strong and solid presence within the parish community and the surrounding Waldo neighborhood.

Conclusion

It is clearly evident that after participating in liturgy, walking in the hallways and visiting with the students, teachers, and parents that the mission statement is truly lived on a daily basis at St. Elizabeth School. Tangible signs of our Catholic faith are embedded throughout the school's physical appearance. Intangibles are also present in the respectful manner administration, staff, parents, and students interact with each other. Students' attitudes are positive toward their school and each other. Although hard to measure, one knows when they are in a welcoming, Christ-like environment. St. Elizabeth is filled with the spirit of their "Christskills".

The visiting team would like to thank all who have worked so hard and graciously to make us feel welcome at St. Elizabeth School. Special thanks to Mrs. Nickel, Father Bruce and the school staff. You have each put tremendous effort and time into this study and your preparations for our visit.

The accreditation process is meant to be a tool for school improvement. We congratulate you for all that has been done and promise the support of the Catholic Schools Office in your continued growth and development.