

Archbishop Jordan Catholic High School

Catholic School Improvement Program

April 7 - 10, 2014

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

Archbishop Jordan Catholic High School provides programming for the Gr. 9 -12 students of Sherwood Park and surrounding area. It is a large high school with a student population of 1094 students, 64 teachers and 19 support staff. The review consisted of personal interviews with students, parents, staff and priests as well as quantitative surveys of students, staff and parents. The review was conducted by Don Marceau, Principal of Holy Spirit Catholic School, Bob Gerhardt, Education Manager Alberta Education and Shawn Haggarty, Deputy Superintendent.

Commendations

Very healthy respect for the teachers by the students. The students feel that the teachers are ‘top notch’.

Parish involvement in the school through the Alpha Youth Program is a great practice.

When students were asked, how can we make this school better, many students had a hard time coming up with an answer.

The students expressed that there is a strong sense of community, they feel welcomed at school. The spoke very positively about their experience.

88.8% of students surveyed stated that they are receiving a high quality education.

The parents repeatedly noted the strong relationships between the students and staff.

Parents mentioned the strong mix of the Catholicity within the curriculum.

“Teachers are able to work well with the students, they are very strong teachers”.

“My son has a wonderful set of teachers, he is very happy and thus, we are very happy.

87.5% of the students surveyed know that the staff and administration want them to be the best that they can be.

Fr. Jack shared that he and parish members feel very welcome at ABJ.

“Teachers are doing a really great job.”

Parents expressed the strong presence of the Catholic identity throughout the school. Christ in the mural and at the table are powerful symbols.

Numerous students spoke about the freedom’s they experience in the high school environment.

“Our teachers are people, that aren’t just teachers.”

87% of parents and 91.2% of staff are satisfied that ABJ embodies the teachings of Jesus Christ?

Sound assessment practices are in place, the staff shared best practices that are utilized.

A great deal of social justice, leadership activities are occurring in the school. Service hours are required by all students.

80% of parents surveyed are satisfied with the overall quality of the Religious Education program

Professional development funds are clearly laid out and understood by staff. Teachers shared that administration works hard to supply them with the resources they require in their classroom.

The involvement of Fr. Dan and Brother Joe in the school is greatly appreciated. They are constantly in the school. One staff member shared that they have been in a number of schools but have never seen a school where the clergy is as involved.

Staff shared that they have been unpacking the ideas behind RTI - Response to Intervention.

The prayer experience within ABJ is strong. The Catholic Minute is a best practice that could be shared with other schools. The daily prayer experience is respected by the students; the students are quiet and respectful in the hallway when prayer occurs.

Whole school Masses and Liturgies are occurring in the school and church.

83% of parents and 81.5% of staff feel that students show respect for one another.

“I have never seen an angry teacher”, a Gr. 12 student shared.

The high level of respect shown by the students to the staff and the staff to the students is very positive. The staff works very hard for the betterment of the students.

The work of the Religion department, notably the Chaplain, is to be acknowledged. Numerous staff spoke about the leadership and guidance they receive from her. They expressed that she is there to talk with and provides numerous resources that assist in their permeation within their subjects. Fr. Jack also commented positively about the faith leadership she provides.

ABJ is an active vibrant student centered school; there are a high number of student clubs to get involved with.

Wednesday morning staff prayer in the Chapel is a best practice to continue. When two or three are gathered in my name there I am with them.

98% of staff surveyed feel that ABJ is a warm welcoming Christ-centered place.

Staff are strong role models for their students; the students are reflecting the behavior that is modeled to them by their teachers.

Staff expressed repeatedly the appreciation for the support from administration, 'when we need something, they work so that we can get it.'

One staff commented that "Jordan is a welcoming environment to all staff and students. This is one of the main reasons why I love coming to work. I know that students and staff are able to treat each other with respect and serve as models for each other in how to conduct yourself."

Another stated that, "There is an amazing energy that runs through the halls. There is always something going on and it is a direct result of the work done by the staff and students which is always above and beyond what is asked of them.

85% of parents surveyed are satisfied with the amount of communication between school and home.

Recommendations

Community Service / Social Justice - Having a structured, focused school wide social justice plan that would be fully communicated to students, staff and parents. Numerous staff and parents spoke about the great number of activities that are occurring but that they almost 'compete' against each other. A staff member shared that 'lots of charitable stuff is going on by staff but it doesn't seem to be centrally planned.

Professional Learning Communities - staff shared that PLC's are a powerful tool that allow for best practices to be explored and adopted. Numerous staff shared that PLC's used to be structured and planned but now seem to be more ad hoc. Structuring and planning PLC times would be a good practice. As one staff member shared, "PLC's are crucial but we need more of them."

ABJ is a large school, the larger a school is, the greater dependence that occur on the department structures.

Challenge – ‘To continue with the Goal’

Permeation – Permeation of our Catholic faith is a non-negotiable and is an expectation for all. Find opportunities to share the ‘light of Christ’ with your students, continue to be witnesses.

Final Comment

Quote from a Gr. 11 student that was surveyed

“The environment is much better than those of the Public School in Sherwood Park, which I transferred from. The people are friendlier and much more accepting of everyone and their individual identities. I’ve noticed that those who have been in Catholic schools their whole life don’t understand how good they have it at ABJ. The difference in environment and quality of learning is vastly different than those at the high school I came from. I encourage people to go to ABJ and many at my previous school have inquired about switching”

Quote from a Gr. 10 student that was surveyed

“The staff in this school are some of, not only the best teachers, but the nicest caring and committed individuals I have had the pleasure of being taught by.”