



“Where Faith and Learning Grow Hand-in-Hand”
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Improving Student Learning for Catholic Schools

Appendix E-1 Catholic Identity Ongoing Review

“From the first moment that a student sets foot in a Catholic school, he or she ought to have the impression of entering a new environment, one illuminated by the light of faith and having its own unique characteristics. The Council summed this up by speaking of an environment permeated with the Gospel spirit of love and freedom.” *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*, Congregation for Catholic Education, Rome, 1988.

Accreditation Factor #3: Catholic Identity

The school is Catholic, approved by the Local Ordinary (Canon 803), provides authentic Catholic teaching, opportunities for community worship and participation in the sacraments, and promotes evangelization and service to the community.

Standard 4 – Catechist Certification

The Local Ordinary approves those who teach the Catholic Faith (Canon 805), and there is ongoing formation for catechetical and instructional competence.

Task 1 – Survey of Catholic Identity Practices (Surveys and Graphs)

See attached bar graph of survey questions and results.

Task 2 – Narrative

The survey, Catholic Identity Assessment Guide for Part 4, was provided to all members of the faculty and staff, all parents, and all members of the Advisory School Board (this included the pastor and two members of the Board who are not parents at the school).

There were four questions on the survey. For Question 1 (*All teachers have current catechist certification according to local Arch/Diocesan norms, or are in the process of obtaining such catechist certification*), 86 responses were recorded. 61% of those surveyed believe that St. Anthony's School is highly effective; 30% rate the school as effective, 8% as somewhat effective, and 1% as ineffective.

The Catechist Certification process has been assiduously implemented at the school under the leadership of the Religious Coordinator, and all members of the staff have either completed the certification or are in the process of completion. An organized and effective program is in place at the

school to ensure that this requirement is met and that teachers continue their catechetical training in order to renew their certification according to Diocesan guidelines.

For Question 2 [*Administration (pastors/priests and principal) provide ongoing faith formation activities for teachers as a routine part of teacher in-service*], 85 responses were recorded. 66% of those surveyed believe that St. Anthony's School is highly effective; 28% rate the school as effective, 5% as somewhat effective, and 1% as ineffective.

Faith formation activities are a regular part of the school year for faculty and staff. Every faculty and staff meeting begins with prayer, which is rotated among faculty and staff members for its preparation and presentation. The faculty and staff join the parish staff in August for a joint retreat prior to the start of the school year, and two additional school staff retreats occur during the school year (once during Advent season and once during Lent season). The faculty and staff assist in the planning and preparation for, as well as participate in, weekly all-school prayer services each Monday morning and weekly all-school Masses each Friday. The faculty and staff also plan and participate in special liturgies and prayer services throughout the school year for specific seasonal and Church feasts. In addition, the faculty and staff lead the students in prayer several times a day in their classrooms and meetings. A weekly optional Scripture reading and reflection occurs each Tuesday morning in the Staff Lounge, led by one of the members of the faculty.

For Question 3 [*The staff participates in a school-sponsored annual retreat and other activities that help build a faith community among the staff*], 82 responses were recorded. 68% of those surveyed believe that St. Anthony's School is highly effective; 26% rate the school as effective, 5% as somewhat effective, and 1% as ineffective.

For details on the retreat program and other activities, please see the paragraph above under Question 2.

For Question 4 [*Staff meetings include time for prayer and time for discussion about Religion, Catholic values, and the faith formation of the entire school community (parents, students, staff)*], 80 responses were recorded. 60% of those surveyed believe that St. Anthony's School is highly effective; 35% rate the school as effective, 5% as somewhat effective, and 0% as ineffective.

Every faculty and staff meeting begins with prayer, which is rotated among faculty and staff members for its preparation and presentation. On a regular basis and as the need arises, the religion program of the school, Catholic values, and faith formation activities for the entire school community are discussed. These discussions result in changes or additions to the school's curriculum and programs as determined by consensus of the faculty, staff, and administration with the approval of the pastor.

Significant Accomplishments

The results of the survey were very positive; in each of the four question areas, over 90% of the responses were in the effective and highly effective range.

The Religious Coordinator, Mrs. Martha Peerson, does an excellent job communicating with the faculty and staff, facilitating the necessary coursework, and providing the faculty and staff members with information about upcoming events that could be used for catechist renewal hours.

The retreats are spiritually enriching experiences for the faculty and staff. They are carefully prepared by the Religious Coordinator, the Principal, and the Vice Principal. The theme established at the

August retreat is carried throughout the year by being referenced at each faculty and staff meeting. The faculty and staff join the parish staff in August for a joint retreat prior to the start of the school year, and two additional school staff retreats occur during the school year (once during Advent season and once during Lent season).

The parish staff and the school faculty and staff join together for a retreat in August. It is an expression of and recommitment to the support and strong working relationship of the two staffs.

The administration provides release time for faculty and staff members to attend catechetical formation events, as well as reimbursement for expenses.

The faculty and staff have a strong commitment to the completion of certification and the regular renewal of their certification.

Strategies for Improvement

Based on comments that were recorded along with the survey results, there is a need to educate parents and other shareholders in the St. Anthony's School community about the catechist certification program and requirements and the commitment, time, and effort put in by faculty and staff members to achieve and renew their certification.

A link needs to be created on the school web site that contains information about the catechist certification program.

Task 3 - Plan of Action

The administration, faculty, and staff will include information about the catechist certification program on the school web site and in the weekly parent newsletter. This will be overseen by the principal, the Religious Coordinator, and the Technology Coordinator.

Standard 8 - Evangelization

All school personnel are actively engaged in bringing the Good News of Jesus into the total educational experience.

Task 1 – Survey of Catholic Identity Practices (Surveys and Graphs)

See attached bar graph of survey questions and results.

Task 2 – Narrative

The survey, Catholic Identity Assessment Guide for Part 8, was provided to all members of the faculty and staff, all parents, and all members of the Advisory School Board (this included the pastor and two members of the Board who are not parents at the school).

There were nine questions on the survey. For Question 1 (*The principal builds a faith community that is welcoming, prayerful, and makes a clear statement that this is a Catholic faith setting*), 94 responses were recorded. 76% of those surveyed believe that St. Anthony's School is highly effective; 22% rate the school as effective, 2% as somewhat effective, and 0% as ineffective.

For Question 2 (*Prayer permeates the school. It is not limited to morning announcements.*), 94 responses were recorded. 67% of those surveyed believe that St. Anthony's School is highly effective; 28% rate the school as effective, 5% as somewhat effective, and 0% as ineffective.

For Question 3 (*Teachers bring Gospel values into their ordinary teacher experiences*), 93 responses were recorded. 55% of those surveyed believe that St. Anthony's School is highly effective; 32% rate the school as effective, 11% as somewhat effective, and 2% as ineffective.

For Question 4 (*The school provides ongoing opportunities for faith formation for students, parents, and staff*), 94 responses were recorded. 53% of those surveyed believe that St. Anthony's School is highly effective; 36% rate the school as effective, 10% as somewhat effective, and 1% as ineffective.

For Question 5 (*Teachers realize that their first responsibility is to be attentive to their own relationship with Jesus Christ*), 90 responses were recorded. 47% of those surveyed believe that St. Anthony's School is highly effective; 33% rate the school as effective, 17% as somewhat effective, and 3% as ineffective.

For Question 6 (*In every religion class, the teacher attempts to connect faith with life*), 92 responses were recorded. 61% of those surveyed believe that St. Anthony's School is highly effective; 31% rate the school as effective, 7% as somewhat effective, and 1% as ineffective.

For Question 7 (*The teacher attempts to relate the moral, ethical or spiritual ramifications to each area of study*), 90 responses were recorded. 51% of those surveyed believe that St. Anthony's School is highly effective; 35% rate the school as effective, 12% as somewhat effective, and 2% as ineffective.

For Question 8 (*The school reaches out to parents to engage them in the religious formation of their children in every grade – not just sacramental preparation grades*), 93 responses were recorded. 43% of those surveyed believe that St. Anthony's School is highly effective; 38% rate the school as effective, 15% as somewhat effective, and 4% as ineffective.

For Question 9 (*Members of the school community (students, parents) reach out to the newly baptized through cards and gifts of welcome*), 84 responses were recorded. 24% of those surveyed believe that St. Anthony's School is highly effective; 31% rate the school as effective, 29% as somewhat effective, and 17% as ineffective.

Significant Accomplishments

The results of the survey were positive; in 8 of the 9 of the four question areas, over 80% of the responses were in the effective and highly effective range.

Prayer permeates our school through a variety of prayer experiences involving students, faculty, and staff.

A full-day retreat is planned and presented each year for the 7th grade students, and a full-day retreat is planned and presented each year for the 8th grade students. These retreats each occur during Holy Week.

Administration, faculty, and staff members model Gospel values for the school community.

There is no doubt that this is a Catholic school, not solely a private school.

Students and staff members engage in many service projects that tie the religious education in the classroom and the faith formation activities of the school with our community and real life.

Strategies for Improvement

As a school community, we need to reach out to the newly baptized in the school and parish.

The school will use social media and electronic tools for evangelization and engage the students in doing so.

The school will educate parents earlier about the sacramental preparation program of the school and parish and what they can do to prepare for it.

Task 3 – Plan of Action

A list of those who have been newly baptized in the parish and school community will be obtained from the parish; faculty members will oversee the creation by students of messages of congratulations.

Faculty members will explore social media sites and electronic tools for use by students for assignments that will foster evangelization.

The Religious Coordinator will compose a letter to be included in the final report card for kindergarten and first grade parents that will outline the sacramental preparation program for First Eucharist in second grade and the steps necessary to pursue if their child is not yet baptized in the Catholic faith. The section in the Parent-Student Handbook on sacramental preparation will be revised to clarify the time frame for baptism to occur in order for students to receive First Communion in second grade.