



Jean Vanier Catholic School
Catholic School Improvement Program,
December 2 – 4, 2015

Review Purpose – through the perspective of the principles of the “Five Marks of a 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

Jean Vanier Catholic School is a K – 4 school in Sherwood Park. The school is in its third year following a reconfiguration that occurred moving from a K-9 model to an early years school model. The review was conducted by Pamela Gravelle, Principal of Ecole Pere Kenneth Kearns, and Shawn Haggarty, Deputy Superintendent.

Commendations

- Students expressed that they feel they are receiving a quality education.
- Several staff and parents expressed that the student leadership groups have been a positive addition to the school. The work of the J.V Joyful Leaders (Faith, Ukrainian Team, Healthy Living, School Spirit, Leadership, and Young Citizens) with Social Justice and Charity is to be commended.
- The schools involvement with their name sake Jean Vanier and the L’Arche Society is a powerful teaching tool for the students.
- Prayer is an embedded practice in the school, permeated throughout the day. The Monday Assembly, morning prayer over the intercom and lunch prayer are several examples.
- As one staff member stated, it is an expectation that we permeate our Catholic faith into our instruction.

- 93% of parents, 94% of students and 100% of staff who were surveyed reported that the School embodies the teaching of Jesus Christ.
- Brother Joe's presence and faith leadership is appreciated by the staff and students.
- The presence and visibility of the School Admin is appreciated by the staff. Many quoted that an open-door policy exists, this is an indicator of the approachability of the admin.
- 100% of the staff surveyed shared that they are satisfied with the direction the school is headed.
- This year's theme of 'Where is Jesus, Right Here, Right Now' is prevalent throughout the school and has made an impact. Numerous staff spoke about the benefit of the Division Wide Faith Themes.
- Staff have expressed that Admin supports professional development, encouraging teachers to attend various sessions. The PD on Animated Literacy was mentioned by several staff.
- Alignment of the PGP goals to the Division and Provincial goals is occurring. Staff shared that the expectation for PGP development were clearly communicated.
- 97.5% of the students surveyed shared that it is evident that Jean Vanier is a 'Catholic' school.
- The school three year education plan has been shared with staff in a co-generated manner. A committee was set and feedback was sought and incorporated into the plan.
- The involvement with St. Nicholas Parish and Jean Vanier is a positive partnership; St. Nicholas is the patron Saint for the school. In December, the school will be attending St. Nicholas Parish for Mass. Many staff expressed excitement toward this initiative. There is evidence throughout the school that staff and students are actively learning about St. Nicholas, their Patron Saint.
- Staff all shared that they have the student's best interests at heart.
- Don and Bonnie-Lynne are scheduled to take each class to OLPH Parish for Mass two times throughout the year. This provides collaboration time for the teachers and it is appreciated by teachers. This is an excellent practice that is to be commended.
- A staff member shared that "Admin knows what is going on with the curriculum in each classroom. They visit the classrooms regularly giving us feedback. They do an excellent job as instructional leaders."
- One staff member shared that "we have developed our identity as a school and as a staff, we have made huge growth in the past few years, it has been phenomenal."
- The Sacramental Prep bulletin board display is a great way to reinforce the importance of the sacraments.
- Staff have been encouraged to visit teachers in other school to see best practices. This has been very well received by the staff who have participated.
- A staff member stated that "this is a wonderful school to work in, everyone pitches in. We are about kids, we have a professional relationship with each other."
- The conscious decision to provide collaborative opportunities between the Ukrainian and the English program is positive. Numerous staff and parents spoke about this being the right direction for the school.
- 90% of the students surveyed stated that they had the opportunity to participate in service Projects that benefit others.
- Several parents shared that one of the best things about Jean Vanier was its size and sense of community. They stated that they like the K-4 format of the school.

- One parent stated, "There is a real sense of community. When I come to the school everyone knows everyone, everyone talks to everyone. It's a Christ centered community."
- 100% of staff are satisfied that Jean Vanier is a warm welcoming Christ-centered place.
- At the staff meeting, the librarian Aubin Nixon, shared with staff the new books that have been purchased for the library including new religion resources.
- 100% of staff surveyed are satisfied that issues or concerns are adequately addressed.
- An array of social justice/service projects occur within the school. Some that were shared: Advent charities, Ukrainian orphanage, Women's shelter, Food bank, L'Arche.
- Consistently positive feedback on celebrating the Roman Catholic and Ukrainian Catholic Rites together: great learning opportunity, brings our community together, celebrates the similarities as well as the diversities, broadens our horizons, allows kids the opportunity to be accepting of others, recognizing differences and common core values, there's a fundamental sameness, "it creates dialogue, and makes you think about your own faith, and deepens it."
- 91% of the students and 100% of staff surveyed are satisfied that respect among students is evident.
- An Educational Assistant shared that "Admin makes me feel valued; makes me feel just as much a part of this school as the teachers."
- 100% of staff surveyed stated that they are satisfied with the opportunity for focused professional development. A staff member shared that "Admin often approaches us, presenting PD opportunities that we may be interested in."
- A quote from a staff member, "In the staff room, there used to be segregation, and you knew if someone was from the English program or the Ukrainian Program by where they sat...now you'd never know."
- 93% of parents state that they are satisfied that the school leadership and staff demonstrate that Christian values are important.
- "I don't speak Ukrainian and it's been beautiful and an enriching and valuable experience for kids and me to experience the Ukrainian culture. It's actually been life changing."
- Many teachers appreciate the classroom walkthroughs by school leadership, and the opportunity to get specific feedback about lessons. This was shared in several of the staff interviews.
- Monday assemblies "are awesome for gathering everyone together as a community."
- It is great that we have the opportunity to "bring faith into all subjects." One staff shared that we get feedback from public schools about how well-mannered our children are and they treat each other nicely.
- 94% of parents and 100% of staff are satisfied with how the school celebrates its Catholic identity.
- Several staff shared that it is great to see less segregation in the programs, all kids are playing together, that we have moved from an "us and them" to "we."

- “Whenever possible, Admin provide us with resources to do our jobs and they are very open to discussions about our needs, anything that helps our working environment and student learning is considered and often provided.”
- One parent shared, “The best feature about this school is how friendly the environment is; it’s like a family. When I come to the school, every student has a name, is valued and all family situations, no matter how diverse, are valued. The principal gave me a tour, shook my hand and took away any concerns I had. Now when I see him in the hall, he remembers me and calls me by name.”
- In a parent interview, a parent stated, “The school is very welcoming. Effort is made to have parents involved, there is communication by email, phone calls, twitter. I never feel in the dark about what is happening at the school.”
- 97% of the students feel that the administration and the staff want them to be the best they can be.
- Most students strongly agreed that the principal and teachers cared about them. During a student interview, a student stated that the best thing about this school is, “that the teachers care about me, and when we get hurt, they don’t tell us to “suck it up.” Like some teachers in other schools do.”
- One student stated that the best thing about this schools is “being able to celebrate our accomplishments at assemblies.”
- 93% of the students share that the staff and administration care about them.
- One student said, “I love that we get to learn about Jesus.”
- The alignment of School Council fundraising goals to the School’s Priorities is commendable i.e. fundraising supports Quality Learning.
- The sharing of professional learning at staff meetings is an effective practice to build Professional learning capacity.
- The regular ongoing involvement of Brother Joe at the school is appreciated. He is in the classrooms on a monthly basis. This supports strong ties with the Parish and School; his work is integral to the strong school parish relationship.
- Symbols of Catholic Faith are prevalent throughout the school, front entry is inviting. This is a school that proudly celebrates its Catholicity.

Recommendations

- **Jean Vanier's School Priority of Quality Learning Environments**, as outlined in the Three-Year Education Plan, Inspiring Education and the Ministerial Order from 2013, is a recommended area of continued focus. Professional Development focusing on best practices in teaching and learning, student engagement, and technology integration will continue to move Jean Vanier forward.

Several parents referenced increasing the use of technology: using more technology in class; increasing the availability of it and the integration of it in classrooms for student use, not just teacher use as part of the presentation.

The focus on instructional practice is the right focus.

- **Let your Light Shine.** Through staff interviews and surveys it is evident that many gifts are present at Jean Vanier. The staff's gifts, talents and passions will build up the school and continue to raise the bar of professional practice, instructional practice and a culture of positive collaboration. Staff are encouraged to have their voices heard, share their thoughts and ideas. This is the challenge: for the quiet voices to come forward and be shared, to become leaders at Jean Vanier.

Matthew 5:15 'No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house.'

Two Notable Quotes from Parents

"Being a new parent to Jean Vanier, I instantly felt a sense of family in the school. The staff and teachers are able to make this School that houses our children, into a loving, nurturing, and successful family. I am thankful each day to be privileged enough to have my daughter attend Jean Vanier."

"To me the school feels like an extension of our home and both of my children love going there. It is absolutely an amazing place to be and I am so grateful that we are a part of it."