

State of the School

A Report to the Parents and Community of Saints Peter and Paul January 2010

Just as our President, Governor, and Mayor give an annual accounting of "how things are" with our country, state, and city, I think it only right to present to parents and other stakeholders how things are with our school. There is no better basis for the presentation of this report than to use the starting point of the school's last accreditation report left to us by the Visiting Committee of the Western Catholic Educational Association in February of 2008.

When schools are accredited, they are presented with certain criteria to which they make response based on the policies and procedures, the climate and culture of the school. The Visiting Committee comes in for a three day visit making observations and inquiries as to these criteria, after studying a lengthy report prepared by the school making a self-evaluation of programs, policies, and procedures in the following areas: Catholicity, Curriculum and Instruction, Organizational Leadership, Supporting Structures for Students' Personal, Spiritual and Academic Growth, and Resource Management and Development. Once the study and the visit are over, the Visiting Committee determines "areas for growth" and makes recommendation to the Accreditation Commission for a term of accreditation. Once that term has been finally decided, the schools then embark on developing, amending, "growing" in each of those areas identified by the Visiting Committee to prepare for the next round of accreditation. In most cases, as in ours, schools are given six year terms with a mid-term report/visit at the three year mark. So...in anticipation of that mark, and to share with you where we are in terms of our growth and development, the following were the identified "critical" areas for growth and what has been done to address these areas beginning in school year, 2008-2009.

SCHOOLWIDE CRITICAL AREAS FOR GROWTH

Explore the possibilities of hiring an assistant principal

- An assistant principal position was created as added duty for one of our teachers (Mrs. Seeger) during the school year, 2008-2009. This school year, 2009-2010, Mrs. Seeger has assumed that position on a more full-time basis, responsible for coordinating with our Athletic Director on our Sports Program, facilitating our school media center program, acting as chief disciplinarian, and other assorted tasks as required/needed. In the absence of the principal, the assistant principal acts with full authority of the principal.

Explore the possibilities of hiring a counselor/special education instruction

- This past school year, 2009-2010, a school counselor and a special education resource teacher have been hired. Currently, one of our second grade teachers, Mrs. Siath, who possesses her school counseling license, assists students and families on an emergency basis, but also facilitates group counseling programs after school three days a week. Mrs. Marshall was hired at the start of the school year to direct special resource instruction, both in and out of the classroom, for

those students who have been identified as having special learning needs. The Resource Program and the Counseling program are both invaluable programs that exist to support students academically and spiritually (emotionally).

Investigate acquisition of an online school management/communication system

- RenWeb...what more can I say!

Review and refine dismissal procedures to ensure student safety

- In an effort to try harder to keep kids safe, a new drop-off and pick-up system was enacted during the first quarter of this school year, 2009-2010. It was obvious there was a need to review the safe arrival and departure of our students, therefore, the parking lot east of Gramer Hall was designated as a no drop-off lot. To provide added outlets for student arrival and dismissal, the gate on Olsen Street was opened and monitored both before and after school. Refinement in the procedures of how students are to be dropped off and picked up at Drachman were put into place. However, nothing is ever perfect and there is more to be done to ensure student safety and the education of parents in this extremely important matter.

Improvement of vertical communication between the grades in subject areas

- To facilitate communication of all staff members, teams were formulated early in 2008-2009 for the purpose of planning and coordination, curricular study, evaluation of procedures and policies. During these team meetings, an agenda was created to guide discussions at team levels for the work of the faculty and allow for meaningful conversation. During 2009-2010, the study of science curriculum specifically, became topic of team meetings to determine core units of study and the development of objectives, instructional strategies, and assessment coordinated with Arizona State Standards. This work will continue on throughout the remainder of this school year.

Full schoolwide integration of the Discipline with Purpose program

- While this program is the discipline program of our school as outlined in school handbooks, not all staff members use this program as it was designed. Further work is needed and will be integrated into faculty professional development to refine the curricula of the program.

Clearly defined SLE rubrics for each component and each grade level

- Prior to the end of the school year in 2008, faculty adopted a set of rubrics which clarified the student learning expectations of each student and by which a reporting system could then be available for parents. Those rubrics are used in assessment of each student and reported to students each grading quarter. Further refinement of the Student Learning Expectations themselves came in 2010 with the adoption of the acronym PEARL in an effort to help make the expectations better known by students, parents and stakeholders.

Intensify the use of Differentiated Instruction to include the needs of gifted as well as struggling learners.

- Differentiated Instruction professional development has been provided our faculty for a number of years. Simply put, differentiated instruction is presenting lessons in a variety of ways to be sure that all students regardless of their learning style understand the concepts taught. This most frequently involves active participation, the use of both visual and auditory instructional support, "student-talk" and engagement in cooperative groups and learning centers to support their learning. If properly employed, DI can and should meet the needs of gifted learners as others, thereby challenging students of all abilities. The work of differentiated strategies is never "over", because research into how children learn continues. Our teachers have received the benefit of the latest brain-based learning instructional strategies during the inservice days of August, 2009.

Provide teacher aides for classes as needed

- This area quite frankly boils down to finances. As we are not provided with the wealth of resources that public schools have, nor some private schools, we are blessed beyond belief with the great goodness of parent/grandparent volunteers who help teachers who desire help in the classrooms. This parent/grandparent volunteer program is facilitated through the Parental Commitment Program of our Parents Association.

Professional development for teachers in technology, especially in the area of SmartBoards

- Teachers who have integrated white boards in their classrooms have had the opportunity to experience workshops and personalized training in the use of these great boards. As technology changes, other integrated white board technologies appear in our classrooms. At present, there is one board for each grade level, with the exception of kindergarten. Plans to purchase such technology exist to gradually include all teaching areas.

Consistently implement the Diocesan Safe Environment Program throughout all the grades

- Beginning in the school year, 2008-2009, the Diocesan Safe Environment Program was a scheduled week, where community resources were used to discuss personal safety at all grade levels. Those children whose parents decided to discuss this topic at home were provided with out of classroom time while the discussions and presentations took place. The number of those children not participating was minimal. The community program used at our school is the Southern Arizona Children's Advocacy Center. The grade level appropriate presentations take place schoolwide on two days during a calendared week.

Implement the Diocesan Health curriculum, with special emphasis on the Human Sexuality component, utilizing programs from the community

- Beginning with school year 2008-2009 teachers at all grade levels began implementing the Diocesan Health Curriculum within their weekly schedules. The Human Sexuality component is currently under review by administration and school nurse. Community resources have been encouraged through fliers to parents on this important component of educating the whole child; however, we want to be sure that Human Sexuality is not only taught from a biological and physical aspect, but also from an emotional and spiritual aspect. It is important to recognize the parent as the primary educator in this respect as well as the teaching on human sexuality of our Catholic faith.

Provide additional opportunities for extra-curricular activities for students, including student-driven programs.

- Extra-curricular programs at Saints Peter and Paul include an after school sports program, chess club, an outside environmental art group, piano school, scouts, a math tutorial, and counseling programs. Several of these were created as a result of student and parent asking.

Create a strategic plan based on present reality and a new vision for the future

- In the summer of 2008 a committee was formed by members of the school board and parents association, along with the principal, to begin the process of visioning for the future. At subsequent meetings throughout the school year, 2008-2009, this committee met for determination of goals and objectives to give direction to Saints Peter and Paul for future growth. With the help of the pastor and parish finance director, a thorough financial projection was added to assist with the implementation of this three-five year plan for future growth. The Strategic Plan of Saints Peter and Paul is a work of our school leadership, both parent and faculty,

following the guidelines of the National Catholic Educational Association. The goals and objectives of our plan include marketing and recruitment, finance and development, technology, physical plant and facilities. These areas will be the first addressed by our subcommittees at the board level and for fundraising by the parents association as this work "drives" the vision for the future of our school. This plan is available in the school office and will soon be online.

Continue efforts and funds to increase faculty and staff salaries

- This is an area always under review and one which is, of course, driven by student enrollment and finances. Our pastor, working with our parish finance director and parish finance council, creates and reviews the budgets of all ministries of our parish, of which the school is one. While the reality is that teachers in Catholic schools do not receive compensation equal to their public school counterparts, given the income of various revenue streams, the teachers of Saints Peter and Paul earn on average approximately 80% of public school counterparts and are blessed for the fruits of their labors by generous bonuses, paid professional development for licensing and self-advancement, and other small measures to show appreciation for their gifts.

Continue efforts to develop as a professional learning community

- With the formation of teams at developmental levels, the formation of faculty committees, and the administrative leadership team, we are building our learning community to become specifically aware of the most recent research on student learning, instructional techniques, assessments, and other areas within curricular formation, including the use of technology to enhance learning. This area, as seen by the Visiting Committee, is an area in which we will never conclude our work, as we are all life-long learners, striving to be the best we can be for the benefit of the students we see each day.

As you can see, the work provided us as a school community is a lengthy list in which we have accomplished much in these two short years since the accreditation visit. All in all, the work continues...to make this school, our school...the best it can be!