

Ecole Pere Kenneth Kearns Catholic School

Catholic School Improvement Program

October 29 - 31, 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

Ecole Pere Kenneth Kearns is a K – 4 single track French immersion Catholic 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 Paul Corrigan, Principal of Saint John XXIII, and Shawn Haggarty, Deputy Superintendent.

Commendations

- School culture is extremely positive; the staff is caring and genuinely wants to provide a safe and caring atmosphere to the students. Great collegiality amongst the staff was witnessed in the halls, classrooms and staff room.
- Students expressed that they feel they are receiving a quality education.
- Parents and students commented positively on the focus with fine arts. (painting and crafts)
- A student quote, ‘the best thing about EPK is that they celebrate Jesus’s life.’
- Student led school wide service projects are to be positively acknowledged. The work of Mme. MacPherson in this area is appreciated.
- 93% of parents and 94% of staff who were surveyed reported that the School embodies the teaching of Jesus Christ.

- The 'Faith in Action Assemblies' that occur every Monday are student led and faith focused. The Patron Saint for the school, Scripture and the Division Faith Theme are reinforced regularly through these assemblies. This is noted as a best practice.
- 99% of the students surveyed shared that it is evident that EPK is a 'Catholic' school.
- 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.
- Catholic Identity, as shared by a staff member was "it is made to be the number 1 priority in this school."
- Great relationships seem to exist between the staff, students and parents of the school; they are based on respect.
- As quoted by a staff member, "Before you are a teacher, you are a religion teacher."
- It is clear that the permeation of the Catholic faith 'is a corner stone' of EPK.
- Input is solicited from staff, many shared that topics are discussed and the opportunity for input is given prior to most decisions being made.
- The schools practice with PGP's focused on Faith, Quality Learning and the promotion of the French Language.
- 96.5% of parents report that they are made to feel welcome and invited at the school.
- One staff shared that the school is the 'seed bed of the Parish.'
- Administration is seen as 'hands on' and 'problem solvers'.
- A parent identified a best feature of the school as 'its people.'
- 98% of the students and 100% of staff surveyed are satisfied that respect among students is evident.
- Parent quote – "Staff is outstanding, we have had such an outstanding experience these past three years, they are like family. They go above and beyond."
- Development of the Chapel, both physically and spiritually, as a shared goal is a laudable undertaking.
- Permeation of teaching extends into co-curricular activities.
- Staff quote - "Faith is foremost in what we do, this is a Catholic School, it makes me so comfortable because it is who I am."
- 97% of parents and 100% of staff are satisfied with how the school celebrates its Catholic identity.
- Noted by staff, that Admin act as instructional leaders, not merely managers.
- Several staff members reported that as a staff they discuss what they can and need to do to improve.
- All staff seemed focused on the idea of improvement.
- 100% of the students feel that the administration and the staff want them to be the best they can be.
- Best Practice: a prayer activity where crosses with students name are placed on the front, and who they want to pray for on the back. Posted and added to throughout the year, students keep the artifact at the end of the year.
- Staff quote - "Happy to see that in past few years faith has increased division wide"

- Student led prayer over intercom in mornings, staff prayer, before parent meeting prayer are examples of an active prayer life at EPK.
- Collaboration with grade partners and staff is very evident.
- "Faith is lived and practiced"
- Students have a strong sense of belonging and acceptance with the school.
- 99% of the students share that the staff and administration care about them.
- One parent commented that the best thing about EPK is 'the inclusion of special needs students and the effort to make them as included as possible, they work WITH their special needs.'
- Catholic symbols are throughout the school, classrooms and hallways. Beautiful art work is prominent and well displayed.
- The Peer Coaching Support model is a best practice for professional development and staff collaborative learning.

Recommendations

Articulation of the Professional Development Plan and Budget. Many staff members shared that PD is supported by administration but did not seem to be aware of how much money is available. The comment, 'I'm not sure how much money is available but PD is supported if I ask admin,' is symptomatic of several conversations.

We encourage a shared staff conversation regarding professional development and the supports and procedures that are possible. This would increase staff awareness and transparency.

Faith Formation AND French Language Priorities

Several staff and parents acknowledged that faith has been a strong focus of the school and expressed that the French Immersion language portion be given an increased priority.

This is not an Either / Or proposition but an AND. EPK is encouraged to continue with the exemplary focus on faith development AND focus and celebrate the French language and culture. EPK's dual mandate is to be promoted, celebrated and encouraged.

A quote from Father Jack

EPK is very cooperative, absolutely positive relationships with them, never a problem. I'd use them as a model for the other schools they are an exemplar!

A final quote from a Parent

"The staff on a whole is outstanding to say the least! We have always felt very welcomed in the school and blessed that our children are able to attend a school that cares and goes the extra mile ALWAYS! Not to mention the pick-up and drop off drive thru. What an amazing process and thank you for always being there to say good morning to our kids and loving them as much as you do. The school is truly one of a kind."