



## **St. Martin's Catholic School**

### **Catholic School Improvement Program**

**March 14 - 16, 2017**

**Review Purpose** – through the perspective of the principles of the “7 Characteristics 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**

St. Martin's Catholic School provides programming from Kindercare age 4 – to Gr. 6 students of Vegreville and surrounding area. It is a small school with a student population of 275 students, 17 teachers and 7 support staff. The review consisted of personal interviews with students, parents, staff as well as quantitative surveys of students, staff and parents. The review was conducted by Don Marceau, Division Principal, Paul Corrigan Faith and Wellness Principal and Shawn Haggarty, Deputy Superintendent. St. Martin's has a Principal who is in his first year of his designation. The school is ideally located just down the street from St. Martin of Tours Catholic Church. The local pastor, Father Vu is new to the parish. The school is also served by Holy Trinity Ukrainian Catholic Church, and Father John.

#### **Commendations**

The practice regarding PGP's is excellent and an exemplar for other schools to learn from. The PGP is a living document; it is reviewed monthly at the staff meetings. Staff share what they worked on the past month to achieve the PGP goals and articulate a plan on what they will do the next month. Formal PGP reviews also occur with the Administration. One staff member stated “The PGP used to be what an IPP isn't supposed to be, written in Sept, and checked in June.” “It is now a living document.”

Fr. Vu is new to St. Martin's Parish and is starting to visit the school and classrooms. A schedule for his visits has been set.

Service and charitable works are occurring throughout the year. Committees, such as the Lenten Committee, were set up at the start of the school year to assist with the classroom and school wide service projects.

Staff has been provided opportunity for input into the School Assurance Plan. An Assurance Committee has been set that helps develop the plan and then the plan is shared at staff meetings.

A number of staff shared that admin conduct walk-throughs on a regular basis and are present in the classroom.

Each week, Mr. Coles circulates the 'Coles Notes' which is a week at a glance document for staff and parents. This assists in the planning and organization of the school. It is well received.

It is clearly understood by the staff that the Catholic faith and worldview is to be taught in all subjects whenever possible.

A Chapel space is being developed. It is hoped that this space will provide a quiet, prayer space for students, staff as well as serve as an instructional space for religion classes.

PD is supported by Admin; staff spoke positively about the PD opportunities that they have been encouraged to attend. A set budget amount has not been articulated to staff but they feel that they can attend PD if it is aligned to their PGP when they request it.

90% of students surveyed stated that religion is an important part of the school.

Prayer occurs each morning over the intercom. A Faith Assembly occurs the first day of each week. Prayer is an embedded practice throughout the school with students.

The students like the special activities that occur throughout the year. ie. Book Fair, Alberta Opera, Science Fair, Penny Carnival, Talent Show, Family Dance, Family Game Night.

Every student interviewed answered strongly agree to the statement, 'I know the Administration and staff want me to be the best I can be.'

90% of students, 93% parents and 94% of staff are satisfied that St. Martin's Catholic School embodies the teachings of Jesus Christ.

The staff spoke of the collegial family like atmosphere amongst each other. One individual shared that we are a family, sometimes dysfunctional - like all families, but we are a family. Another shared that 'we are a family, I've worked here for many years and I feel blessed to be able to walk through those doors each morning.'

Staff that were interviewed expressed that they feel they have the necessary training to be able to teach the religion program.

The support that Dan provides in the technology area is appreciated by staff.

The parents spoke repeatedly of the warm, welcoming family atmosphere that they feel within St. Martin's Catholic School. One staff member mentioned that "several staff know every child by name."

Fr. Vu expressed that he feels very welcome when he attends the school; he visits the school each week for a block. He is pleased that the staff bring the students to the parish for Mass and various liturgies.

95% of staff feel that the school is a warm welcoming Christ-centred place.

From the interviews, the parents overwhelmingly are very happy with the experience their child is receiving at St. Martin's.

A parent commented that they appreciated the community created by staff and that it was evident to them that the staff was 'hard-working and unified.'

90% of parents surveyed are satisfied with the overall quality of the Religious Education program.

The Academies are universally supported and appreciated by the students; they look forward to them each week.

Students expressed that 'the teachers here, care about everyone; they make sure no one is left behind.'

Staff and students expressed that they appreciate it when Father visits the school.

89% of staff are satisfied that the school leadership and staff demonstrate that Christian values are important.

The yearly division faith themes seem to be very well received by the staff. They repeatedly shared that the faith theme provides a focus for the Division and assists them in 'sharing the Good News' with their students.

One teacher said, "As teachers, our voice is heard." Another said, "I feel like my input is always asked for and heard."

Several staff expressed that the Faith and Wellness Day was a PD highlight of their year.

The new Religion program has been universally well received by the teachers that have had an opportunity to use the resource.

91% of students surveyed stated that they are receiving a high quality education.

The culture of Catholicity is very evident in the school. Prayer corners and displays are present throughout the classrooms. A crucifix should be added to the entry ways of the school.

## **Recommendations**

Staff Prayer:

While regular prayer is an integral part of the day with students at St. Martin's, it is recommended that school staff have an opportunity for regular prayer as a staff. A morning, or weekly prayer is a best practice that has been implemented in many other schools. As in Matthew 18:20, 'where two or more are gathered in my name, there I am with them.'

#### Chapel:

Numerous staff mentioned a desire for a designated place to pray for themselves and with students. It is recommended that finishing of the Chapel should be considered a priority for the school. This would provide a focal point where prayer can occur, a place for Religion classes, a place for Adoration.

#### Perception of Safe and Caring Environment:

A number of students and parents, at the upper elementary level, expressed a concern regarding the level of consequences given when a discipline concern arises. The staff, as a team, is encouraged to explore this perception and look at various best practices around providing a safe and caring environment.

#### **Challenge – ‘To Continue With the Goal’**

Permeation – We are pleased to share that every staff member expressed that they work to permeate faith into all their classes. St. Martin’s is first and foremost a Catholic School; staff are called to be witnesses of Christ in every interaction they have. Permeation of our Catholic faith is non-negotiable and an expectation for all. We encourage you to continue to find opportunities to share the ‘light of Christ’ with your students and be witnesses.

#### **Final Quote**

One parent told the story of bringing her young son to the school for his very first orientation visit. While being escorted around the school by grade 4 and 5 students, he commented to his mother, “Mom, Jesus is here!” The mother has been totally impressed with the focus of St. Martin’s on faith and learning. She indicated that her older daughter who is now in high school is even contemplating being baptised as a Catholic because of her experiences at St. Martin and now St. Mary!