

Academic Excellence

Standard 8

An excellent Catholic school uses school-wide assessment methods and practices to document student learning and program effectiveness, to make student performances transparent, and to inform the continuous review of curriculum and the improvement of instructional practices.

Narrative Summary

St. George Catholic School uses school-wide assessment methods and practices to document student learning and program effectiveness, to make student performance transparent, and to inform the continuous review of curriculum and the improvement of instructional practices. School wide assessments include Terra Nova and ACRE along with the use of rubrics, projects, tests, observation, collaborative group work and oral presentations. A grading criteria is outlined for the entire school and outlines the minimum number of grades needed per quarter along with the weighted percentages. The school wide grading scales are published on the report cards and in both the faculty and parent handbooks and are used consistently from grade to grade. Methods of assessment are analyzed through the careful observation of lesson plans and through the Curriculum Mapping Program. Assessment results are recorded through an online reporting system, Renweb, where parents can see grades as soon as they are entered. Teachers use assessments to guide their instruction and make adjustments as needed based on the outcomes.

Commendations

St. George Catholic School uses a variety of school-wide assessments to document student learning and program effectiveness. Nationally normed Terra Nova, administered to 2-8th graders, and ACRE, administered to 5th and 8th graders, is given annually. These standardized test scores are reviewed within and across grade levels. In addition to standardized tests, the faculty of St. George Catholic School use a variety of curriculum-based assessments aligned with learning outcomes and instructional practices to assess student learning, including formative, summative and authentic performance. Faculty members collaborate during level meetings and department meetings to develop school wide criteria for valid assessment of students. This is evident through common rubrics and assessments aligned to the curriculum. Teachers have the opportunity to view and compare the different types of assessments given at each grade level through the Atlas Curriculum Mapping program. Students in grades 2-8 also use the STAR Reading Program which monitors reading progress and assists students in book selection to achieve optimal growth in reading skills for the Accelerated Reader. Administration monitors the use school-wide assessment methods and practices to document student learning and program effectiveness.

Criteria used to evaluate students' performance and the reporting mechanisms are aligned with curriculum, valid, consistent, transparent, justly administered and easily accessible by students and families. The data from the Terra Nova standardized test is shared and communicated to parents, teachers and students in a variety of ways. Parents can view Diocesan Terra Nova comparisons on Renweb, along with their individual children's scores that are sent home. A presentation by the principal at the start of the school year also communicates student learning outcomes based on the analysis of these test results. 100% of staff members agree that St. George Catholic School uses standardized and teacher developed assessments to document student learning and report the outcomes to parents, according to the AdvancEd Program Effectiveness survey of 2013. St. George Catholic School achieves transparency of student classroom performance in the following ways: a minimum number of "current, separate reportable experiences" are required per quarter, through RenWeb- web-based grade reporting, emailed mid-quarter progress reports and printed quarterly report cards. All student performance reports are easily accessible to parents. Parent/Teacher conferences are held at the end of the 1st quarter and 3rd quarter to discuss student goals and progress. In addition to these conferences, individual conferences are also held with parents of students who are considered "at risk"

based on the promotion criteria. Promotion criteria along with all other reporting criteria, is stated in the Parent/Student Handbook.

School-wide and student data generated by a variety of tools are used to monitor, review, and evaluate the curriculum and co-curricular programs, to plan for continued and sustained student growth and to monitor and assess faculty performance. Aggregated student data from standardized test scores is normed to appropriate populations and used by teachers to adjust curriculum and instructional practices. Results are carefully analyzed during the summer and at faculty meetings by teachers and staff and can be resourced at any time throughout the year. Trends and weaknesses from the data are noted and the curriculum, instruction and resources are adjusted appropriately. According to the AdvancEd Program Effectiveness 2013 survey, 91% of staff members agree that St. George Catholic School uses the results of standardized and teacher developed assessments to improve the curriculum and increase learning. Terra Nova test results are just one way that teachers evaluate curriculum and instruction. Other diverse methods of student achievement such as projects, written test/quizzes, benchmark assessments and oral presentations, are also used to evaluate curriculum and instruction. Faculty members collaborate in professional learning communities to evaluate curriculum and instruction by analyzing common assessment results. Discussions focus on vertical alignment to determine where there are gaps or overlaps in the curriculum and instruction. Faculty grade level teams also meet regularly to examine student learning data which can dictate a need for revisions and adjustments in instructional practices.

Delivery of concepts and instructional practices directly affect student achievement; therefore, instructional practices are closely monitored. Weekly lesson plans are submitted and reviewed by a supervising member of the administration team. Teachers also learn from one another through quarterly peer observations: Teachers Supporting Teachers Program. Feedback from these observations provides positive reinforcement along with suggestions for professional growth and the improvement of instructional practices. Faculty performance is assessed through formal and informal observations. Meetings are held with teachers to discuss performance goals and give feedback, verbal and/or written. Opportunities for professional growth and commendations are discussed. St. George Catholic School teachers are encouraged to self-evaluate their teaching styles and methods, so that the best practices are utilized by all teachers. St. George Catholic School faculty is eager to keep the school in the forefront of academic excellence; therefore evaluation of all aspects of student learning is reviewed and revised frequently.

Recommendations

Although standardized test results are shared with all stakeholders, it is recommended that a more clear explanation of how to read and interpret results would be beneficial to teachers and parents.

It is recommended that St. George Catholic School teachers provide more opportunities for students to self-assess themselves in the classroom.

Providing students and parents with a sample copy of the report card would assist them in setting goals for quarterly achievements.

Rating of Standard

Based upon the evidence, recommendations and benchmark ratings for Academic Excellence standard 8, St. George Catholic School rates themselves at level 3.