

Defining Characteristics of Catholic Schools

2. Contributing to the Evangelizing Mission of the Church

By reason of its educational activity, Catholic schools participate directly and in a privileged way in the evangelizing mission of the church (The Catholic School, 9; The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, 5, 11; The Religious Dimensions of Education in a Catholic School, 33). As an ecclesial entity where faith, culture, and life are brought into harmony, the Catholic school should be a place of real and specified pastoral ministry in communion with the local Bishop. (The Catholic School, 44; The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, 14; The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, 34;) The environment in Catholic schools should express the signs of Catholic culture, physically, and visibly (The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School; Miller, 2006, p. 40).

Narrative Summary

"The Catholic Church exists to evangelize - to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners with God, and to perpetuate Christ's sacrifice in the Mass, which is the memorial of His death and glorious resurrection" — **Pope Paul VI**, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 14. In order to evangelize, one must have a personal encounter with Jesus, be eager to learn about Jesus and be willing to teach others about Jesus.

St. George Catholic School's student body is over 95% Catholic and the school recognizes the importance of evangelization in the lives of school families, students and faculty while striving to provide an environment that is rich in catechesis for all stakeholders. Even prior to admissions, families know they are welcome in the St. George Catholic community of faith as is witnessed on our website, application information and any school publicity. Non-Catholic students and faculty are welcomed and accepted. An average of 80% of St. George Catholic School stakeholders reported in the AdvancEd Defining Characteristics Survey of April 2013 that the school does everything it can to include all students who are wishing to receive a Catholic education. In 2013, St. George was proud to have a non-Catholic faculty member and her husband go through the parish RCIA program.

Great emphasis is placed upon celebrating the Eucharist. Students, faculty and families gather together in the Church sanctuary every Friday, on Holy days, and for class masses to celebrate the gift of the Holy Eucharist. Students and faculty play an integral role in the celebration, serving as musicians, altar servers, lectors and Extraordinary Ministers. The Pastor and Associate Pastor use Mass as an opportunity to teach the congregation about specific parts of the Mass, Saints, symbols, colors, prayers, and even why certain vestments are worn.

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Religious instruction in the classroom occurs 4 - 5 days a week depending on the grade level. Lessons are taught by qualified catechists at each grade level. All teachers incorporate religious instruction into their daily routine and curriculum also. As part of the school's mission to evangelize, students are visited by seminarians and in turn correspond with the seminarians throughout the year. In 2014 one of the school's visiting seminarians was ordained and shared the sacrament of his ordination with the students.

Students pray regularly, a minimum of 4 times daily. Many prayer times begin with intentions for others. Students also pray through dance, music and song. All classes participate in a yearly retreat. One hundred percent of St. George Catholic School faculty and students strongly agree that prayer is an important part of each day as is evidenced in the AdvancEd Defining Characteristics Survey of April 2013.

St. George Catholic School students not only pray together but play together as well. St. George Catholic School is fortunate to offer a large, successful athletic program. One of the ways we evangelize through our athletics program is by promoting sportsmanship, praying before events and in 2013 a cross was embroidered on every athletic uniform as a reminder of our Catholic faith.

Over 95% of St. George Catholic School stakeholders indicated in the AdvancEd Defining Characteristics Survey of April 2013 that students learn about Jesus and the teachings of the Catholic Church. Evangelization, Eucharistic celebrations, classroom instruction and prayer come together to create a rich and comprehensive foundation for the students.

Examples

- Crosses on athletic uniforms
- Crucifixes
- Prayer tables
- Assembly
- Prayers/Intentions
- Service hours
- Bulletin boards
- Mission statement posted
- Seminarian visits
- Standards
- Statement of Admissions
- Website
- Facebook
- Teaching Masses

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Direction

The faculty of St. George Catholic School will continue to align curriculum and strengthen and expand the school wide religion programs through the use of Atlas, the curriculum mapping program. Weekly level meetings will continue to provide a time for grade levels to plan together. In August of 2014, teachers were asked to increase the level of Catholicity within their classrooms. This is monitored through e-walks and formal observations that are conducted by school administrators throughout the year.