

## **Defining Characteristics of Catholic Schools**

### **3. Distinguished by Excellence**

**Church documents, history, and practices, supported by Canon Law, establish that first and foremost a Catholic school is characterized by excellence. Consistent with the defining characteristics, Catholic schools should implement on-going processes and structures and gather evidence to ensure excellence in every aspect of its programs, life, and activities (Gravissimum Educationis 8 and 9; Code of Canon Law, Canon 806 #2).**

#### **Narrative Summary**

In 1 Timothy 4:12, the Bible states “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” This refers to Catholic Christians and their goal to achieve excellence in the eyes of God. St. George Catholic School strives for excellence in all aspects of its programming.

The three most important areas are faith, academics, and service, as is noted in the school mission statement. Catholic schools exist to educate children about the rich traditions and teachings of the Catholic Faith. School Mass is celebrated every Friday, on Holy days, and each month class masses are held for specific grade levels. According to the AdvancEd Defining Characteristics Survey of April 2013 one hundred percent of St. George Catholic School stakeholders and students agree that students and faculty pray regularly. Many prayer times begin with intentions for others. Students also pray through dance, music and song. All classes also participate in a yearly retreat.

Religious instruction in the classroom occurs 4 or 5 days a week. Religion classes that are taught 5 days a week are for those students preparing for sacraments. Religion lessons are taught by qualified Catechist at each grade level. Students complete projects, classwork and homework as part of the Religion curriculum and are assessed at every grade level. St. George Catholic School is proud of its students’ academic achievements.

According to the student Terra Nova scores of 2012, St. George Catholic School students perform in the top 25% of all students. High academic achievement begins with leadership and teachers that have a clear vision of what students need to know in order to be successful. Great teaching begins with great teachers. St. George is proud that one hundred percent of the faculty is certified by the state of Louisiana Department of Education.

St. George Catholic School maps its curriculum via an online curriculum mapping program, Atlas. Atlas ensures that subjects are integrated, vertically aligned and curriculum standards are met. This allows for the school curriculum to be rigorous, relevant, and challenging for the students.

Approximately one third of the students are recognized for their high grades each 9 weeks. One hundred percent of the students scored well on high school entrance tests

## **Defining Characteristics of Catholic Schools**

and were accepted into their high school of choice. St. George students outscore the Diocese of Baton Rouge and the nation on standardized tests.

St. George Catholic School is also committed to enhancing and growing available technology for teachers and students and to providing ongoing and relevant professional development opportunities. Faculty members have participated in the LACUE Conference each year since 2012, SmartBoard Training, Apple TV training and technology specific training related to textbooks and curriculum.

St. George Catholic School is fortunate to have resources that allow students, in 6th, 7th and 8th grade, the opportunity to experience activity classes in foreign language, creative arts, art education, technology, special sciences, and practical living such as personal money management. Through creative scheduling, students attend a different activity class each 9 weeks. Additionally, students in grades Kindergarten through 5th grade participate in a variety of enrichment classes that are scheduled for one day a week throughout the year. St. George Catholic School is home of a robust athletics program.

Service is one of the cornerstones of St. George Catholic School. A yearly calendar outlines a monthly service project. Service projects range from writing letters to parish shut-ins, singing at local nursing homes, and collections for the needy and sick. Letters of thanks from St. Vincent de Paul, The Juvenile Diabetes Foundation, American Heart Association and others are often posted for teachers and students to view.

### **Examples**

- Terra Nova scores
- Grade reports from RenWeb
- Environment
- Professional development
- High school entry scores
- Technology
- Level meetings
- Department meetings
- Survey data
- Honor roll
- High school National Merit Semi-finalists and Finalists
- Resources
- Teacher quality
- Faculty meetings
- Physical plant
- ACRE test scores
- Director of Religious Education
- Catechists at each grade level
- Service projects

## **Defining Characteristics of Catholic Schools**

### **Direction**

St. George Catholic School will continue to focus on ways to strengthen the faith of its students through hands-on and meaningful projects and service opportunities. The school will continue to focus on a rigorous and relevant curriculum that strives to meet the needs of all students where they are. Emphasis will be placed on strategies to reduce teaching group sizes and increase academic outcomes. Service opportunities will continue with more emphasis placed on student driven service projects.