

REPORT OF FINDINGS

ST COLUMBAN SCHOOL E361
10855 STANFORD AVENUE
CALIFORNIA 92480
DIOCESE OF ORANGE



AND

WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

IMPROVING STUDENT LEARNING 2012

**A SELF STUDY PROCESS
FOR CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS**

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REPORT OF FINDINGS

for
St. Columban School E361

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PREFACE

We, the Visiting Team, wish to commend the pastor, principal, faculty, staff, parents, and student body of St. Columban School for working together to make the school a vibrant, stable community that values its roots, celebrates its faith, and is committed to excellence in an integrated academic program. We pray that the good work that you have done and the plans that you have made for the future will help you become an even better school.

The Visiting Team found our three days at St. Columban School professionally rich and personally rewarding. We wish to thank all of you: pastor, principal, faculty, staff, parents, and students for your warm and gracious hospitality.

May the Christ we serve bless you with every success as you journey into the future.

Chapter 1: Introduction

A. How the Self Study was Conducted

St. Columban School took a positive, thoughtful, and thorough approach to the Self Study process. The process began informally in August 2014 as an underlying goal implicit in faculty meetings and in-school professional development. In-service and discussion on such topics as California Common Core Standards, Next Generation Science Standards, and looking at the school's existing Schoolwide Learning Expectations (SLEs) in light of critical thinking paved the way for further discussion of numerous topics important to the Self Study process.

The process began in earnest in the fall of 2015 when the WCEA/WASC leadership team was sent for training in the ISL protocol. In January 2016 committees were formed and appropriately staffed with administrators, teachers, and staff. To facilitate whole-community input, surveys were administered to parents, students, clergy, faculty, and staff. Additionally, large shareholder meetings were held in the spring of 2016 and 2017 to garner further input. The responses from the surveys and the meeting were reviewed, analyzed, and incorporated into the Self Study document. Throughout 2016, the committees constantly reviewed, revised and refined their drafts of the Self Study. In early 2017, all faculty and staff came together to review the goals of the Self Study findings and discern the direction of the Action Plan. The Action Plan was discussed and shared with the parish staff and parents. It represents the input and findings of participants, and will help the school continue in the ongoing process of improving student learning.

The school reported that they had three obstacles to overcome during the Self Study process; firstly a shortage of time, secondly the retirement of two staff members who had the most longevity at the school, and finally the inexperience of the faculty and staff with the Self Study process.

The faculty and staff stated that they found the Self Study process to be a worthy one. They appreciated the collaborative approach to the process, and the focus on student achievement and

learning. They also valued the opportunity to create an Action Plan that moves learning forward for the children.

B. Involvement and Collaboration of Shareholders in Completing the Self Study

St. Columban School involved clergy, administration, faculty, staff, parents, and students in the Self Study process. Input was received from all entities through surveys, round table discussions, and individual meetings. While the Visiting Committee found the school to be highly effective in engaging shareholders in the creation of new SLEs and receiving input regarding the criteria of the Self Study, the Visiting Committee discerned that the analysis of the data from the surveys and round-table discussions was performed primarily by the school faculty, staff, and administration.

The Visiting Committee applauds the commendable commitment to ongoing improvement and the many new initiatives that have been implemented since the last accreditation.

Chapter 2: Context of the School

A. School Profile

St. Columban School, founded by the Religious Sisters of Charity in 1956, serves a middle class community of 302 students, comprised mainly of cultures from Mexico, Vietnam, and the Philippines. The school has seen an increase in enrollment since the last accreditation visit in 2011. The increase is attributed to various factors including an influx of technology, the addition of a transitional kindergarten program, the creation of a Montessori preschool, the addition of aides from TK to grade 3, and a more developed program of tuition assistance. In addition, several facility improvements have been made such as the addition of air conditioning, the renovation and reorganization of the library space as a multi-media center, the addition of a science lab, and the painting of classrooms.

The school reported that parents responded favorably to the integrated and rigorous academic educational experience fueled by the commitment to Catholic identity, the school-wide technology integration, improvements to the curriculum, and the development of the fine arts program. Parent and student surveys affirm their satisfaction with an 80% to 98% rating of the various school programs.

St. Columban School has enhanced its communication with parents. Technology tools such as Remind, Sycamore Grading, and the school website and app have greatly improved the quality and speed with which administration, teachers, parents, and students communicate with one another. Additionally, the school has an active social media presence.

All teachers adhere to the diocesan requirements for completing a Clear California Credential and for completing the Basic Catechetical Certification within three years of hire. Many of the teaching faculty hold a Master's Degree. The Visiting Committee found strong evidence for ongoing commitment to professional development and learning by the faculty.

The Visiting Committee found St. Columban School to be a vibrant community that values its roots, celebrates its faith, and is committed to excellence in an integrated academic program.

B. Use of Prior Accreditation Findings to Support High Achievement of All Students

The Visiting Committee found that the school has effectively addressed the critical goals identified during the last accreditation cycle. As the school completed goals and evaluated changing needs, they revised their Action Plan to reflect their current reality.

The prior goals were as follows:

1. St. Columban School will continue to explore, evaluate, and implement improvements in technology hardware and software to aid student learning.
2. St. Columban School will work to improve the analysis and use of standardized test scores and classroom assessment to drive the curriculum thus meeting the needs of all learners.
3. St. Columban School will explore and develop formal assessments to measure understanding and internalization of the Schoolwide Learning Expectations.
4. St. Columban School will research, develop, and implement programs to strengthen student learning through the analysis of grade level curriculum and cross-curricular collaborations.
5. St. Columban School will create and implement a student study team program that will meet the needs of identified students.

Ongoing systematic change is evident within the school. The Visiting Committee observed that the school was more successful in achieving some of the critical goals than they were with others. The Visiting Committee found strong evidence that the school has integrated technology into teaching and learning. The school has a 1:1 program with iPads in grades 3-8, and an iPad cart and Chrome book cart that are shared in grades TK-2. The school also has a Makerspace in the library media center. The Visiting Committee commends the faculty for their commitment to integrating technology into the teaching and learning program.

The school has established a foundation for using assessment data to help drive instruction and learning. Staff meetings include professional development on accessing and using data, discussion of formative and summative assessments, and examples of how data is used to inform teaching and learning. The protocol for formal observation of teachers includes a discussion of how data was used to set the objectives for the lesson. The Visiting Committee lauds the school for recognizing the need to build their capacity in analyzing the many sources of data available to them, and concurs with the direction that the principal and faculty are taking in this area.

In 2015 the school revised their SLEs to better reflect the reality and needs of their students. The school also adjusted a critical goal of their Action Plan to “Develop formal assessments that measure student growth on achievement of SLE.” In early 2016 the school developed a rubric, which is used to provide insight into the level of student mastery. The faculty continues to refine this tool. There is insufficient data at the moment to discern the efficacy of the assessment tool.

The Visiting Committee applauds the school’s ongoing commitment to the goal regarding the development and implementation of programs to strengthen learning through the analysis of

grade level and cross-curricular collaborations. The school adopted Atlas Rubicon to create curriculum maps. Observation of these maps indicate that the maps are not fully populated. Additionally, the school has discerned that in order to provide comprehensive coverage of the standards, validate their test results, and establish a firm foundation for differentiation to meet the needs of all students they must analyze their curriculum and identify gaps. The school has identified this as a critical goal for their current Action Plan. The Visiting Committee commends the school's commitment to this goal and is highly confident in the school's ability to achieve it.

Finally, the school has established a Student Success Team that meets on an ad hoc basis to discuss specific situations.

In summary, the school has effectively addressed the critical goals.

Chapter 3: Quality of the School Program

A. Assessment of the School's Catholic Identity

The Visiting Committee observed that St. Columban School is highly effective in assessing the school's Catholic identity, successfully integrating the Roman Catholic faith in prayer experiences, offering opportunities to receive and celebrate the Sacraments, and has a consistent religion curriculum implemented across all grade levels. Continued faith formation is provided for parents and staff as well.

The school has effectively expanded their religion curriculum beyond their core text to include Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, implementing it into the preschool through first grade programs. This has allowed a deeper religious experience for students. They continue to look at extending this program to second grade next year, to allow the hands-on approach to further enrich the sacramental preparation and extend parental involvement.

The Visiting Committee observed the many programs and liturgical celebrations that effectively allow parents, students, and faculty to experience their faith on a deeper level. Students visiting the Atrium were highly engaged in hands-on faith activities. Incorporating frequent visits by priests to instruct faculty and students, and adding additional liturgical celebrations has enriched the school community. Additionally, with the guidance of the Pastor, school-wide weekly Masses have been established so students and parishioners can support each other in their spiritual development.

B. Defining the School's Purpose

The Visiting Committee observed that St. Columban School is highly effective in defining the school's purpose through its Mission Statement, Philosophy, and SLEs. Guided by the charism of the founding order, the school lives their motto, *Caritas Christi Urget Nos*, the Love of Christ Urges Us. The motto, along with the school's role as a ministry to the parish, continues to be the driving force behind the school's purpose.



St. Columban's Mission Statement and Philosophy are highly effective in their reflection of the Catholic identity of the school. Many opportunities are provided for students and their families to live out their Catholic identity. The entire school community participates in several activities such as Walk Out of Poverty, weekly parish Mass, and daily prayer. A school chaplain works closely with students, administration, and staff, offering spiritual and emotional support.

The Visiting Committee observed the SLEs and curriculum standards to be highly effective in defining the school's purpose. The school's SLEs come directly from the school's Mission Statement and clearly define goals for students. To ensure proficient mastery of the SLEs the teachers focus on one SLE and its indicators each month. During morning assembly, Student Council was observed presenting the SLE of focus and provided concrete examples of how to live it in daily situations. Students are assessed on their achievement of the SLEs using a newly created assessment instrument.

In recognizing the need to keep up with today's learners the school was highly effective in revising its Mission Statement, Philosophy, and SLEs. The Visiting Committee commends the faculty and staff in continuing the development of their rubric to monitor and assess the SLEs.

C. Organization for Student Learning to Support High Achievement of All Students

The Visiting Committee finds the organizational structures of St. Columban School to be highly effective at supporting the achievement of all students and promoting the Catholic identity of the school. The pastor, principal, teachers, and staff play an indispensable role in maintaining such strong Catholic identity. In addition to celebrating Mass on a weekly basis with the student body, the pastor attends faculty meetings. The school chaplain leads the second graders through sacramental preparation while parish priests disseminate religious lessons. Together the school and parish collaborate and participate in social justice projects both locally and globally. Catholic identity is a lived reality at St. Columban School.

The Visiting Team observed that St. Columban's principal, teachers and staff have created an environment focused on student learning. Data identified through STAR testing, formative/summative assessments, and Accelerated Reader 360, identify student strengths and weaknesses. Teachers share growth profiles with students and are able to reassess to monitor growth in learning. Funds are allocated for teachers to attend professional growth workshops, conferences, and services to enhance knowledge of current research based practices. To meet the needs of all students the principal has committed to develop and support co-curricular programs. Physical education, music, and art programs have continued to support or have been recently implemented to educate the whole child.

The school utilizes a variety of platforms to communicate with shareholders including: a school app, Facebook, email, Sycamore, texting, and a school website. Additionally, traditional methods of communication including conferences, progress reports, and Back-to-School Nights are upheld.

The Visiting Committee found that the school is effective in analyzing how their governance and other structures could be improved to support student learning. The Visiting Team commends the school for identifying the need to reestablish a Consultative School Board utilizing strong community leaders with an initial focus on development, marketing, and facilities management. This board will further enhance the school's long-range planning and financial stability.

Systems are in place through the campus ministry to meet the social and emotional needs of the students, staff, and families. Looking to the future, the school will ensure continued student achievement through ongoing teacher professional development and the implementation of available programs and resources.

D. Data Analysis and Action to Support High Achievement of All Students Accreditation Factor

St. Columban School is effective in the use of data to drive curricular improvements based on its analysis of faith formation and Catholic identity, student performance assessments, student learning profiles, modifications to instruction, as well as challenging students, and implementing new curricular materials.

The school is highly effective in utilizing data to strengthen their Catholic identity. Based on responses by shareholders to questions relating to the school's SLEs and the eight standards of Catholic identity, the school responded with an implementation of various activities and daily routines. There is evidence of student involvement regarding opportunities to experience their faith through service projects and community service. The school is highly effective in the use, disaggregation, and analysis of data regarding student achievement and growth. Through active participation, primarily led by the teachers, trends and issues are identified based on a variety of assessments. The Visiting Committee observed through provided evidence, indicators relating to fluid timeframes in reference to flexible groupings based on student performance data, namely, teacher directed questioning, observations, benchmark data, and collaborative meetings with both grade-level and vertical articulation within respective curricula.

The school is effective in modifying instruction to support all students. Evidence of growth is indicated by percent of students in each quartile regarding STAR Reading and Math, yet there is a need for more definitive initiatives or school-wide programs that are designed to address how specific teaching/learning strategies are implemented. The Visiting Committee commends the school for indicating its need to continue professional development regarding its implementation of differentiated approaches based on data analysis.

The Visiting Committee applauds the School for acknowledging that continued efforts toward amending the domain of data and furthering data driven decisions relating to learning progressions and curriculum.



E. High Achievement By All Students Toward Clearly Defined SLEs and Curriculum Standards

St. Columban School is highly effective in its incorporation of Catholic values into the curriculum. The Visiting Committee observed the SLEs in supporting the integration of Catholic values across the curriculum in order to allow Catholic identity to be part of the school culture. The school has been focusing on one SLE per month in order to provide a deeper understanding for the students. A rubric has been created, which allows teachers to record how well students are embodying the SLEs in their daily living. The school is working toward a more consistent protocol for reporting progress in this area.

The Visiting Committee observed the school to be effective in delivering a curriculum that is challenging, comprehensive, and relevant for all students. There are several standards used as a basis for delivering instruction such as California Common Core Standards, NGSS, Diocesan Religion Standards, and the SLEs. These programs are used as a means of delivering a curriculum that is rigorous, age appropriate and has a strong emphasis on reading and writing across the curriculum. The school's intention is to accomplish this through its use of curriculum mapping. The goal of the curriculum mapping is for school personnel to gain a clear picture of the connection between standards, objectives and assessment, resulting in a curriculum that is designed to allow all students to achieve. Once the maps are complete, teachers can then use a variety of methods in order to assess students both formatively and summatively, resulting in a system that can establish differentiated learning groups focused on individual, group, and whole class instruction. Additionally, the school has identified the analysis of curriculum maps as one of the goals in the Action Plan.

St. Columban School is effective in the strategic use of technology to enhance instruction as well as to provide opportunities for intervention. The Visiting Committee observed the use of programs like IXL and Accelerated Reader 360 which allow students to progress at their own pace and take ownership of their own learning. Additionally, the school recently completed a library remodel that provides a Makerspace that is currently being used to enhance the STEAM curriculum. This program provides students the opportunity for enrichment in areas that are necessary for students to be competitive in a 21st century world.

The school is effective in ensuring that all students are making progress in achieving the outcomes necessary to successfully advance to the next grade and or level. St. Columban School uses STAR Reading and Math assessments to determine both individual and collective student needs. The data is disaggregated and used to determine if benchmarks are being met. Because there is a very small population of students with learning differences, the school relies on the individual classroom teacher to make the necessary accommodations for students.

F. Instructional Methodology to Support High Achievement of All Students Accreditation Factor

The Visiting Committee found St. Columban School to be effective in applying research-based knowledge about teaching and learning in the instructional process. The school staff models Catholic values, applies research-based instructional methodology, and modifies



instruction/curriculum to help all students achieve the SLEs. They also integrate technology into the teaching/learning process and have identified what improvements are needed in curriculum and instruction to support the high achievement of all students.

The school staff is highly effective in modeling Catholic values by incorporating the school's Mission Statement, Philosophy, and SLEs. With teachers participating in many aspects of their own personal Catholic experience such as various parish organizations and ministries, they also model their Catholic values at school through community prayer, engaging in social justice projects, and leading classroom discussions regarding liturgical seasons, feast days, and classroom lessons.

The Visiting Committee observed teachers using various research-based instructional techniques and methodologies to meet the needs of their students such as station rotation, think-time, collaborative small group, and peer editing. The school is effective in the integration of technology into the teaching/learning process. Through a variety of platforms and curriculum based programs that require technology utilization, teachers and students are able to interact with content and share feedback digitally through the use of iPads and Chrome books in all grade levels.

Based on feedback from teachers the school has indicated that a writing program is necessary to maintain focus on effective communicators and address critical thinking prompts in all content areas. Furthermore, the Visiting Committee congratulates the school for determining that ongoing professional development must be completed regarding to integrate differentiated instructional practices for all grade levels.

G. Support for Student Spiritual, Personal, and Academic Growth.

The Visiting Committee observed that St. Columban School is highly effective in their support of students' spiritual, personal, and academic growth. The school provides students with an abundance of curricular and co-curricular activities such as music, art, and sports that support the achievement of the SLEs and ensures the highest degree of student growth and success. The Visiting Committee observed the active participation in art and music to be highly engaging for all learners. The school provides many opportunities for the students to share their faith including but not limited to Adoration, weekly Mass, and Catechesis of the Good Shepherd.

St. Columban School is effective in preparing for emergencies. Fire, earthquake, and lockdown routines have been established and drills are conducted regularly and modified as needed.

Title IIA funds have been utilized to support on-going professional development. Faculty participates annually in the Orange County CUE, ISTE and NSTA Conferences, and Discovery Education events.

H. Resource Management and Development to Support High Achievement of All Students.

The Visiting Committee found that the school uses its financial resources to support Catholic identity in a highly effective manner. The financial direction recommended by the Diocese of

Orange Department of Catholic Schools (DCS) is followed. This process allows the school to use its financial resources to sustain a quality Catholic education. The school is highly effective in how it develops, implements, and monitors its finances through the use of Cathonet for accounting and FACTS for the collection of tuitions and fees. There is an endowment fund that is used annually as a contribution to the general fund. The Orange Catholic Foundation provides scholarship allocations to assist families requiring assistance in tuition and fees.

The school is highly effective in reporting its financial status to its shareholders. To maintain transparency, an annual financial overview is reviewed with the parish finance council and published in the parish bulletin each year. The school finances are presented to the parents annually at a parent meeting.

The school is highly effective in planning its resources through the budgeting process that reviews and analyzes expenses compared to enrollment in order to continue to enhance student achievement. Enrollment has increased over the last six years allowing appropriate resources to fund a variety of academic programs to carry out the school's purpose and enhance student learning. The school utilizes parish and community resources to support Catholic identity and student achievement.

The Visiting Committee commends the school for having identified the need to reestablish a Consultative School Board utilizing strong community leaders with an initial focus on development, marketing, and facilities management. This board will further enhance the school's long-range planning and financial stability.

The school is highly effective at planning for technology implementations and upgrades. They have invested heavily in instructional resources and infrastructure over the last three years to support and enhance student-learning opportunities. It was evident to The Visiting Committee that technology is an integral component of the learning environment across all grade levels. They have implemented a 1:1 program in grades 3-8 with devices available for grades TK-2 through shared resources. Careful consideration is made in the selection of applications and software in order to minimize the cost of technology in the school. Additionally, with the goal of a six-month operating budget in savings, technology implementation and upgrades will be sustained.

In summary, St. Columban School is highly effective in analyzing its financial position to determine the most effective way to exercise financial stewardship. The school is financially sound with strong structures and systems in place to ensure that resources are used in a fiscally prudent manner.

Chapter 4: The Action Plan

A. Design and Alignment of the Action Plan with the Self Study Findings

Schoolwide Lists of Significant Accomplishments and Critical Goals

1. The expansion of the liturgical celebrations spread throughout the school year to ensure that students are steeped in Catholic culture and have a wide variety of prayer experiences.
2. Provision of a robust challenging academic program delivered by a qualified and dedicated faculty that serves the students in a highly effective manner.
3. Strong relationship between parish and school facilitated by a committed principal and an involved pastor.
4. Reconstructed SLEs, school Mission Statement, and Philosophy to be more reflective of the needs of today's students based on current research and best practices.
5. Renovation of the Library/Media Center to ensure the support and growth of the digital library and Makerspace for STEAM.
6. Creation of a strong digital learning environment with technology integrated across the curriculum that supports differentiated instruction and promotes a growth mindset.
7. Numerous opportunities for students in grades TK to 8 to participate in extracurricular and co-curricular activities.
8. Ongoing commitment to building awareness of Catholic Social Teachings and outreach to the community through a wide variety of projects.

Critical Goals (identified by school)

1. Implement a comprehensive school-wide writing program to increase writing literacy in all content areas and across grade levels.
2. Analyze curriculum maps across grades and improve comprehensive school-wide coverage of the standards increasing the effectiveness of student instruction.
3. Provide a more comprehensive and systematic student-centered approach to sacramental preparation that incorporates the parents' role as primary educators.
4. Fully integrate a comprehensive STEAM approach to student learning including Makerspace resources and collaboration across grades and curriculum.
5. Increase effectiveness of differentiated for all students.

St. Columban School has effectively created an Action Plan that has been built upon the analysis of relevant student achievement data and the needs identified in the Self Study. The goals selected by the school are focused on implementing a school-wide writing program to increase writing literacy in all content areas, analyzing curriculum maps to provide comprehensive coverage of the standards, and incorporating NGSS into the curriculum. The Action Plan identifies specific strategies and activities to enhance and support student achievement. Each activity has a specific timeline and adequate benchmark activities to assess and evaluate the effectiveness of the Action Plan.

OPTION A: *N/A.*

OPTION B: *N/A.*

A. Capacity to Implement and Monitor the Action Plan

The Visiting Committee found that the school has effectively addressed the critical goals from the previous Action Plan. Annual attention has been made to the goals through reflection, evaluations, and adjustments, and completion of these goals has been a focus for improving student achievement since the last Self Study. The Visiting Committee is confident in the school's ability to follow through on the implementation of the strategies of the current Action Plan.

The school has effective monitoring processes in place to ensure the completion of the Action Plan. The administration and faculty will be involved in assessing, implementing, and monitoring the plan through faculty meetings. The Visiting Committee recommends that a process be developed where other shareholders such as the pastor, parents, and school committees be included as appropriate to ensure achievement and offer support as needed. Plans are in place to communicate the progress of the action items to shareholders through parent meetings, newsletters, assessment reports, and Student Learning Assessments.

The school is effective in identifying resources needed for implementation of their Action Plan. The cost of implementing two of the goals has not been determined in some areas but will be a factor during the implementation process. At this time there are no impediments that the school must address in order to accomplish the Action Plan.

Visiting Committee Summary Thoughts:

The Visiting Committee was blessed to be part of St. Columban School for the three days of the accreditation visit. The committee was fortunate to be part of a school where the pastor, principal, faculty and staff, as well as the parents, share a strong commitment to ensure that all students are provided with a comprehensive faith-filled education. The Catholic identity is the lived reality of an environment infused with the Gospel spirit of love.

The Mission Statement, Philosophy, and SLEs are a driving force of the school and are rooted in 21st century learning. There is an exceptional commitment to the formation of the whole child. The Visiting Committee observed a dedicated principal and faculty committed to student growth in the areas of curriculum, faith, technology, and differentiated instruction. Throughout the team's visit, the committee observed that the students were engaged and challenged in their learning environment.

In conclusion, the Visiting Committee found St. Columban School to be a vibrant, community that values its roots, celebrates its faith, and is committed to excellence in an integrated academic program. Any recommendation of the Visiting Committee is intended to enhance the excellent work of the school community.

