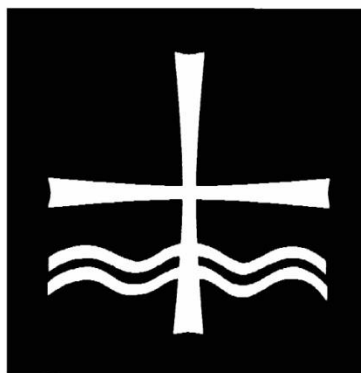# Report of the Archdiocesan Review Team for Ascension

**4600 Lynnbrook Dr.
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Mr. Terry Mullaney, Principal

November 15, 2017

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The Review

Ascension hosted an Archdiocesan Review Team (ART) Site visit on November 15, 2017. On September 7, 2017, the Lead Evaluator met with the principal, Mr. Terry Mullaney, to discuss the logistics of the site visit. On October 24th, the Lead Evaluator contacted the team members and gave them their assignments followed by the links to the school's accreditation report and evidence files. The four Archdiocesan Review Team members were organized around the three domains of the Index of Educational Quality: Leadership Capacity, Teaching and Learning Impact, and Resource Utilization, and were assigned a domain and/or a specific standard. Team members began their initial review of their assignments and then extended their evidence review to additional domains providing a focused, yet comprehensive approach to the review.

The Archdiocesan Review Team met on November 1st for an organizational meeting to prepare for the visit by providing context for the visit and to review team member responsibilities. In addition, members presented their initial indicator ratings. The team discussed the evidence the school had provided, decided on assignments during the visit as well as drafted interview questions for each stakeholder group.

The Archdiocesan Review Team began its site work on November 15th with a short organizational period at the beginning of the day. Immediately after, the ART received a general overview of the school and a tour, provided by Mr. Terry Mullaney, followed by a presentation from Mr. Mullaney and the school's counselor. The remainder of the day was spent observing classes (14) and interviewing stakeholder groups. Further evidence review, team deliberations, and work sessions were held in the afternoon. The day ended with the delivery of the Oral Exit Power Point presentation to communicate the findings of the team to the community.

Interviews were held with the pastor(s), parents, faculty, students, Board members and non-certified/support staff to gain their perspectives on topics relevant to the school's effectiveness and student performance. The feedback gained through the interviews was considered with other evidence and data to support the findings of the Archdiocesan Review Team. The following chart depicts the number of persons interviewed in each representative stakeholder group.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWED	NUMBER
Pastor(s)	1
Board Members	6
Administrators/Leadership Team	6
Instructional Staff	7
Support Staff	6
Students	14
Parents	11
TOTAL	51

The Archdiocesan Review Team would like to thank the entire Ascension community for its thoroughness during the course of the review. The school completed all necessary assignments for the site visit and implemented the protocol with fidelity, humility, honesty, and a desire to learn and improve their school. Their transparency and commitment to the process was exemplary in every aspect.

RESULTS: Teaching and Learning Impact
Standard 3 – Teaching and Assessing for Learning

The school's curriculum, instructional design, and assessment practices guide and ensure teacher effectiveness and student learning.

INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	ART SCORE
3.1	The school's curriculum provides equitable and challenging learning experiences that ensure all students have sufficient opportunities to develop learning, thinking, and life skills that lead to success at all levels.	3
3.2	Curriculum, instruction, and assessment are monitored and adjusted systematically in response to data from multiple assessments of student learning and an examination of professional practice.	2.25
3.3	Teachers engage students in their learning through instructional strategies that ensure achievement of learning expectations.	3
3.4	School leaders monitor and support the improvement of instructional practices of teachers to ensure student success.	3
3.5	Teachers participate in collaborative learning communities to improve instruction and student learning.	3
3.6	Teachers implement the school's instructional process in support of student learning.	2.5
3.7	Mentoring, coaching, and induction programs support instructional improvement consistent with the school's values and beliefs about teaching and learning.	3.75
3.8	The school engages families in meaningful ways in their children's education and keeps them informed of their children's learning progress.	4
3.9	The school has a formal structure whereby each student is well known by at least one adult advocate in the school supports that student's educational experience.	3
3.10	Grading and reporting are based on clearly defined criteria that represent the attainment of content knowledge and skills and are consistent across grade levels and courses.	2.75
3.11	All staff members participate in a continuous program of professional learning.	3.25
3.12	The school provides and coordinates learning support services to meet the unique learning needs of students.	2

Standard 5 – Using Results for Continuous Improvement

The school implements a comprehensive assessment system that generates a range of data about student learning and school effectiveness and uses the results to guide continuous improvement.

INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	ART SCORE
5.1	The school establishes and maintains a clearly defined and comprehensive student assessment system.	2
5.2	Professional and support staff continuously collect, analyze, and apply learning from a range of data sources, including comparison and trend data about student learning, instruction, program evaluation, and organizational conditions.	2
5.3	Professional and support staff are trained in the evaluation, interpretation, and use of data.	1.5
5.4	The school engages in a continuous process to determine verifiable improvement in student learning, including readiness for and success at the next level.	2
5.5	Leadership monitors and communicates comprehensive information about student learning, conditions that support student learning, and the achievement of school improvement goals to stakeholders.	3.5

Student Performance Diagnostic

The quality of assessments used to measure student learning, assurance that assessments are administered with procedural fidelity and appropriate accommodations, assessment results that reflect the quality of learning and closing gaps in achievement among subpopulations of students are all important indicators for evaluating overall student performance.

EVALUATIVE CRITERIA	ART SCORE
Assessment Quality	2
Test Administration	4
Equity of Learning	3
Quality of Learning	3

Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (ELEOT)

Observations of classrooms or other learning venues were conducted for a minimum of 20 minutes per observation. Team members conducted multiple observations during the review process and provided ratings on 30 items based on a four-point scale (4=very evident; 3= evident; 2=somewhat evident; 1=not observed). The following table provides the aggregate average score across multiple observations for each of the seven learning environments included in ELEOT.

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT	SCHOOL RATING
Equitable Learning	**2.8**
High Expectations	**3**
Supportive Learning	**3.2**
Active Learning	**3.1**
Progress Monitoring and Feedback	**2.8**
Well-Managed Learning	**3.4**
Digital Learning	**2.9**

The opportunity to visit classrooms revealed a very committed faculty and staff that are implementing a progressive curriculum that prepares students for life far beyond Ascension. Fourteen classrooms observations were conducted by the Archdiocesan Review Team. Overall the ELEOT scores were very strong, reflecting a rigorous academic program within a supportive and nurturing atmosphere. The highest learning environment rating at Ascension was in the Well-Managed Learning Environment at 3.4; the lowest learning environment ratings were in Equitable Learning and Progress Monitoring and Feedback at 2.8. The other ELEOT scores for Ascension were: High Expectations at 3.48, Supportive Learning at 3.2; Active Learning at 3.1, and Digital Learning at 2.9.

In a very supportive, highly structured, and caring school culture, students are challenged to reach their full potential. High expectations for preparing students for the 21st Century and beyond are a deeply held value at Ascension. Small class sizes allow teachers to know their students well and have numerous opportunities for one-on-one interactions with them on a daily basis. In the surveys, parents reported a high degree of satisfaction with the level of student achievement and the attention that each student receives.

The Archdiocesan Review Team observed very respectful and interactive classes. It was evident that teachers respect and trust the students, giving them the freedom in class to take risks and not fear failure. The respect between students was demonstrated in a similar fashion. Students showed an interest in and a willingness to help each other succeed through collaborative work that focused on higher-order thinking skills. Several of the classes observed were clearly student-centered which also allows for the growth of effective communication and leadership skills between students.

Students were highly engaged in all classes observed. All students were on-task at all times with little need for redirection. Students felt very comfortable asking questions about their work and about new material being presented. Overall, the tasks presented in the observed classes were of an appropriate complexity for the students.

The large majority of the observed classes were student-centered and hands-on. Centers and group activities were regularly observed. Students were highly engaged in the lessons, asking questions, testing hypotheses, responding to teacher queries, actively taking notes, etc. Connections to the Catholic traditions were also evident in the classes observed by the ART.

An abundance of technology usage was observed in many classrooms. Students were actively engaged in research and creating original products using high-tech applications. As a completely 1:1 school, it was evident that students were very comfortable with complex technology usage regardless of age or academic ability.

Ascension provides a safe and strong Catholic education focused on the academic, physical, spiritual and social growth of its students. Students perform well as evidenced by their academic assessments and parents are very satisfied with the level of student achievement.

Eleot Data Summary

A. EQUITABLE LEARNING

Item	Average	Description	Very Evident %	Evident %	Somewhat Evident %	Not Observed %
1	2.4	Has differentiated learning opportunities and activities that meet her/his needs	21%	21%	36%	21%
2	3.9	Has equal access to classroom discussions, activities, resources, technology, and support	86%	14%	0%	0%
3	3.1	Knows that rules and consequences are fair, clear, and consistently applied	29%	57%	14%	0%
4	1.6	Has ongoing opportunities to learn about their own and other's backgrounds/cultures/differences	0%	29%	7%	64%

B. HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Item	Average	Description	Very Evident %	Evident %	Somewhat Evident %	Not Observed %
1	**3.2**	Knows and strives to meet the high expectations established by the teacher	36%	50%	14%	0%
2	**3.6**	Is tasked with activities and learning that are challenging but attainable	64%	36%	0%	0%
3	**2.2**	Is provided exemplars of high quality work	14%	14%	50%	21%
4	**3.4**	Is engaged in rigorous coursework, discussions, and/or tasks	43%	57%	0%	0%
5	**2.7**	Is asked and responds to questions that require higher order thinking skills (e.g. applying, evaluating, synthesizing)	7%	57%	36%	0%

C. SUPPORTINVE ENVIRONMENT

Item	Average	Description	Very Evident %	Evident %	Somewhat Evident %	Not Observed %
1	**3.4**	Demonstrates or expresses that learning experiences are positive	43%	50%	7%	0%
2	**3.4**	Demonstrates positive attitude about the classroom and learning	43%	57%	0%	0%
3	**3.1**	Takes risks in learning (without fear of negative feedback)	43%	36%	7%	14%
4	**3.4**	Is provided support and assistance to understand content and accomplish tasks	43%	50%	7%	0%
5	**3.0**	Is provided additional/alternative instruction and feedback at the appropriate level of challenge for her/his needs	29%	43%	29%	0%

D. ACTIVE LEARNING

Item	Average	Description	Very Evident %	Evident %	Somewhat Evident %	Not Observed %
1	**2.9**	Has several opportunities to engage in discussions with teacher and other students	36%	29%	21%	14%
2	**2.9**	Makes connections from content to real-life experiences	36%	29%	29%	7%
3	**3.4**	Is actively engaged in the learning activities	50%	43%	7%	0%

E. PROGRESS MONITORING AND FEEDBACK

Item	Average	Description	Very Evident %	Evident %	Somewhat Evident %	Not Observed %
1	**2.9**	Is asked and/or quizzed about individual progress/learning	21%	57%	14%	7%
2	**2.9**	Responds to teacher feedback to improve understanding	21%	50%	29%	0%
3	**2.9**	Demonstrates or verbalizes understanding of the lesson/content	29%	36%	36%	0%
4	**2.4**	Understands how her/his work is assessed	7%	43%	29%	21%
5	**2.9**	Has opportunities to revise/improve work based on feedback	21%	43%	36%	0%

F. WELL-MANAGED LEARNING

Item	Average	Description	Very Evident %	Evident %	Somewhat Evident %	Not Observed %
1	3.6	Speaks and interacts respectfully with teacher(s) and peers	57%	43%	0%	0%
2	3.5	Follows classroom rules and works well with others	57%	36%	7%	0%
3	3.4	Transitions smoothly and efficiently to activities	57%	29%	7%	7%
4	3.1	Collaborates with other students during student-centered activities	43%	36%	7%	14%
5	3.5	Knows classroom routines, behavioral expectations and consequences	50%	50%	0%	0%

G. DIGITAL LEARNING

Item	Average	Description	Very Evident %	Evident %	Somewhat Evident %	Not Observed %
1	3.4	Uses digital tools/technology to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning	57%	36%	0%	7%
2	2.9	Uses digital tools/technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works of learning	50%	7%	21%	21%
3	2.5	Uses digital tools/technology to communicate and work collaboratively for learning	36%	14%	14%	36%

FINDINGS

Improvement Priority

Provide training for professional and support staff on the evaluation, interpretation, and use of a wide variety of data to improve student learning (5.3).

Evidence and Rationale

Little evidence was presented to show that professional and support staff have been offered in-depth, consistent professional development in the use of data to improve instruction. While data from Terra Nova testing is available and summarized in faculty meetings, it appeared that the administrative staff was doing most of the analysis and simply summarizing for the instructors. Classroom teachers were not able to articulate how these scores are used to guide school-wide improvement or daily classroom decisions. There was also a lack of evidence that teachers are evaluating the data from other long-term assessments (ACRE, Acuity, High School Placement) to guide their coursework decision making. Additionally, while formative assessment practices were evident in classroom visits, it was not clear that the data from these assessments is effectively analyzed to impact student learning.

Student achievement and school progress will continue to grow as all instructional staff become more comfortable with the analysis of multiple measures of student data to guide decisions about student learning.

Opportunity for Improvement

Curriculum, instruction, and assessments are monitored and adjusted systematically in response to data from multiple assessments of student learning and an examination of professional practice (3.2).

Evidence and Rationale

Although differentiated instruction was noted in many classrooms, there does not appear to be a systematic method for using a variety of student achievement data to inform instruction. The use of formative assessments, along with the collection and evaluation of the results of these assessments, provides an opportunity for improvement at Ascension. It is evident that the teachers at Ascension are well-versed in many instructional strategies that exercise higher-order thinking skills. If formative assessment data is analyzed in conjunction with these instructional strategies, additional opportunities for student growth would be revealed.

Powerful Practice

The school engages families in meaningful ways in their children's education and keeps them informed of their children's learning progress (3.8).

Evidence and Rationale

Ascension has an organized and effective communication system in which parents stay well informed of their child's academic progress, class curriculum aspirations, and school-wide endeavors. Families have multiple ways to stay informed including Ascension's app, is a one stop shop that allows for very convenient and timely forms of communication between the school and its parents. Communication among the school and its families is clearly a priority for Ascension and an area where they are well accomplished. Communication is implemented consistently and systematically throughout the school, community and parish.

RESULTS: Leadership Capacity

Standard 1: Purpose and Direction

The school maintains and communicates a purpose and direction that commit to high expectations for learning as well as shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning.

INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	ART SCORE
1.1	The school engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a school purpose for student success.	2
1.2	The school's leadership and staff commit to a culture that is based on shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning and supports challenging, equitable educational programs and learning experience for all students that include achievement of learning, thinking, and life skills.	3.5
1.3	The school's leadership implements a continuous improvement process that provides clear direction for improving conditions that support student learning.	2

Standard 2: Governance and Leadership

The school operates under governance and leadership that promote student performance and school effectiveness.

INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	ART SCORE
2.1	The governing body establishes policies and supports practices that ensure effective administration of the school.	3.25
2.2	The governing body operates responsibly and functions effectively.	2.25
2.3	The governing body ensures that the school leadership has the autonomy to meet goals for achievement and instruction and to manage day-to-day operations effectively.	4
2.4	Leadership and staff foster a culture consistent with the school's purpose and direction.	3.75
2.5	Leadership engages stakeholders effectively in support of the school's purpose and direction.	3.5
2.6	Leadership and staff supervision and evaluation processes result in improved professional practice and student success.	3

Stakeholder Feedback Diagnostic

EVALUATIVE CRITERIA	ART SCORE
Questionnaire Administration	4
Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis	4

FINDINGS

Improvement Priority

The school engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a school purpose for student success (1.1).

Evidence and Rationale

Over the past five years, Ascension has undergone considerable changes that have brought new life to the school. These positive curricular changes have been fully adopted by the students, families and broader school community and have become a mark of distinction and true differentiator for the school. Due to this rapid progress, it was found that the school's formal purpose, mission and vision do not align with the perception of stakeholder groups and do not accurately capture the school. As a result, an improvement priority has been identified to engage in a systematic, inclusive and comprehensive review and revision of the school's purpose, mission, and vision. The process should include a wide variety of stakeholder groups and ultimately reflect the fantastic culture and philosophy of the school. Additionally, a process for regular review of the school's purpose would be beneficial to ensure consistent alignment between the school efforts and the stated mission and vision for years to come.

Powerful Practice

Leadership and staff foster a culture consistent with the school's purpose and direction (2.4).

Evidence and Rationale

The culture and philosophy of education at Ascension is truly extraordinary. Although the formal mission, vision and purpose statements do not reflect the day-to-day operations of the school, each and every stakeholder could articulate the academic approach and its impact on the students of Ascension. It is notable that the culture has been embedded with such fidelity under these circumstances. The leadership, specifically Principal Mullaney, has done a remarkable job at leading the charge which has led to long-term changes at Ascension that not only stabilized enrollment, but also led to rich, challenging, one-of-a-kind learning in the classroom.

RESULTS: Resource Utilization

Standard 4: Resources and Support Systems

The school has resources and provides services that support its purpose and direction to ensure success for all students.

INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	ART SCORE
4.1	Qualified professional and support staff are sufficient in number to fulfill their roles and responsibilities necessary to support the school's purpose, direction, and the educational program.	3
4.2	Instructional time, material resources, and fiscal resources are sufficient to support the purpose and direction of the school.	3
4.3	The school maintains facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, clean, and healthy environment for all students and staff.	3
4.4	Students and school personnel use a range of media and information resources to support the school's educational programs.	4
4.5	The technology infrastructure supports the school's teaching, learning, and operational needs.	3.75
4.6	The school provides support services to meet the physical, social, and emotional needs of the student population being served.	2.5
4.7	The school provides services that support the counseling, assessment, referral, educational, and career planning needs of all students.	2.5

FINDINGS

Powerful Practice

There is a wide and sophisticated range of media and information resources available to the students at Ascension, as well as the personnel to implement these technological tools (4.4).

Evidence and Rationale

Ascension has done an exemplary job of providing all staff and students with technology devices and resources to enhance learning opportunities throughout the school day. It is evident that technology is an integral part of learning and that all students and staff feel comfortable with these tools. The focus on technology effectively crosses all academic areas and includes effective communication and many resources for parents. It is important to note that Ascension has both the tools for this focus, as well as the infrastructure to support it. Ascension has made the professional and financial commitment to embrace technology as a pathway to 21st Century learning. Using technology to support the diverse needs of students allows learner to concentrate on the "business of school" while allowing instructors to promote the academic achievement of students.

CONCLUSION

During the course of the Ascension site visit several general themes relating to student success and organizational effectiveness emerged. Among them were:

- There is firm commitment to technology and 21st Century learning at Ascension. This commitment shapes the culture, policies, and procedures of the school. There is a tacit, but ever-present, accountability of all stakeholders to these values and one can see them being lived out in the day-to-day operations of the school.
- There is excellent communication between the school and the parents. Families have many ways to stay informed of both their child's learning as well as larger community, and parish-related news. Ascension also utilizes their strengths in technology to provide a broader range of communication sources than what is typically seen in many schools.
- Ascension has also worked diligently to improve the physical environment and infrastructure to allow for effective use of the space in alignment with the school's educational philosophy. Students have an exceptional variety of media sources available. The classrooms themselves are conducive to collaboration, communication and critical thinking. It is apparent that providing this environment has been an equal priority for both the school leadership and the parish.

Over the past five years, Ascension has experienced a steady growth in enrollment, which in turn has been quite reaffirming of its educational endeavors. The school and parish has funded many capital projects to give students access to the most up-to-date technology and resources. As a result of this rapid growth, it was found that formal documents such as the mission and vision statements require revision to adequately reflect the purpose of the school.

As Ascension begins to settle from a period of rapid change, it is a good time to re-group and begin identifying the various data sources available to measure student growth. Now that a truly performance-based curriculum has been fully embedded, the school can begin to enjoy the fruits of their labor. As Ascension moves into its next phase, an opportunity for measurement and refinement of instruction, through the use of a variety of data sources (both formative and summative), can lead to continuous learning and student achievement.

IMPROVEMENT PRIORITIES

- Provide training for professional and support staff on the evaluation, interpretation, and use of a wide variety of data to improve student learning (5.3).
- The school engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a school purpose for student success (1.1).

INDEX OF EDUCATION QUALITY

The IEQ comprises three domains: 1) the impact of teaching and learning on student performance; 2) the leadership capacity to govern; and 3) the use of resources and data to support and optimize learning.

The overall and domain scores can range from 100-400. The domain scores are derived from: the AdvancED Standards and Indicators ratings; results of the Analysis of Student Performance; and data from Stakeholder Feedback Surveys (students, parents, and staff).

	ART IEQ SCORE
Teaching and Learning Capacity	278.57
Leadership Capacity	320.45
Resources Utilization	310.71
Overall Score	296.15