2021-2022
Annual School Development Report

St. Thomas Aquinas

Our Mission: The school community of St. Thomas Aquinas is committed to academic excellence nurtured in a safe and inclusive learning environment. Here our students can reach their fullest potential supported by home, school, and community partnership.

Introduction

We returned to school in September 2021 in a "low risk" environment. While we were still adhering to our *Safe Return to School Plan*, we were presented with some opportunities to return school to a sense of familiarity that students and staff enjoyed prior to the pandemic. The previous year had seen many challenges, but in the face of these challenges, we continued to have success on the part of our students.

As in previous years, we are very pleased with our School Development Survey results as a whole - but we are always looking for ways to enhance academic opportunities for our students. Our PMF data and survey results indicate that we are experiencing success academically when compared to other schools which are similar in size, as well as when compared to the provincial results. We take a tremendous amount of pride in these results, but like any institution devoted to student learning and engagement, there are always ways to improve student opportunities.

During the Strategic planning day scheduled in October 2021, we decided as a school based planning team to extend our school improvement to include not only Collective Efficacy, but also Assessment Practices. We will be involved in a SBL - Standards Based Learning Pilot during the 2021-2022 school years.

This is the third year using the new school development model and we are extremely proud of the progress we have made thus far. We believe that we are on the right path to enhance and improve our students and their learning opportunities at St. Thomas Aquinas. The data we used to drive our school development plan is most current from the Fall of 2021 of which we analyzed during our strategic planning day.

Our strategic planning day gave use the opportunity to examine our school data and establish next steps to address areas of needed growth as well as areas of success and positivity. Here is some overall results which helped us shape our school development direction, based on our data:

- The vast majority of feedback from teachers, students and their families was very positive. In many cases most students are connected to school, enjoy coming to school everyday and feel as though we have high expectations for them. The students feel overall, as though the school climate is positive and conducive to learning. Students like their teachers, have good relationships with them and are always excited to see them.
- When analyzing our PMF data, we have scored High or Very High in every area except for school engagement in the junior high grades. In terms of comparison with other schools (similar in size and population) as well as the provincial results, we scored significantly higher in all areas except for school engagement in the junior high grades.

Strategic Issue/Goal: Continue to Improve Collective Efficacy
Objective: To improve student engagement
How did you know this was a Strategic Issue/Objective? What evidence did you have?   After analyzing our school development data and performance measured data, we extrapolated the following:

- In our grade 3 and 4 students, 78.9 percent indicated that they were excited about school; 20% plus indicated they were not interested.
- 82.4% of these students talked about what they were learning in school, outside the school with others; almost 20% of our students did not.

For the 2021-2022 school years, we have continued with our STA curious initiative. This occurs 3 times in a regularly scheduled slot. We have students involved in many different learning activities throughout the school. We also continue to expand our technological ability with the purchase of new school Chromebooks for our students. In combination with our already available school based resources, and those supplied by the district, we have all students from grades 4 to 8 connected to the digital world. This implementation has led to increased use of technology in the classrooms for both instruction and assessment through the G-suite platform. Students are very excited to connect to their learning digitally.

Year end Summary of Progress. What evidence do you have to support this progress?
- Student engagement seems to be high for the most part
- STA Curious is sometimes successful, with some students struggling to decide on learning topics at times.
- Deep learning teams did not meet during the 21/22 school year
- Deep learning activities were implemented by individual teachers in their classrooms schoolwide.
- Technology is being used consistently in elementary and Junior High classrooms to improve and enhance student learning and engagement.

Next Steps...
- Teachers will use technology throughout teaching and assessment activities.
- Students will engage in STA Curious/Deep Learning Initiatives three times in a 14 day cycle, with a scheduled partnership with CYN and Elders & Youth.
- Administration will attend the Deep Learning inservice.
- Make Deep Learning a daily initiative in all classes each day.
- Establish a STA Curious/Deep Learning Initiatives Team

Strategic Issue/ Goal: Improve Collective Efficacy

Objective: To improve student engagement.

How did you know this was a Strategic Issue/Objective? What evidence did you have?

After analyzing our school development data and performance measured data, we extrapolated the following:
- In the junior high grades only 45.8% of our students indicated they were engaged in their learning
- As well there were indications that determination, perseverance and grit were areas of lower positive responses.

We will continue to incorporate more opportunities for "Deep Learning" throughout the curriculum. In November 2021, school administration will be involved in a Deep Learning Global PL session. This professional learning will help us incorporate more authentic and exciting learning opportunities daily.

Year end Summary of Progress. What evidence do you have to support this progress?
- Student engagement seems to be high for the most part
- Many students at the junior high level do not take full advantage of the STA Curious approach, while some are successful, this is a problem. Plans will be implemented in the coming year to provide additional levels of engagement and support during the sessions.
- Deep learning teams did not meet during the 21/22 school year
- Deep learning activities were implemented by individual teachers in their classrooms schoolwide.
- Technology is being used consistently in elementary and Junior High classrooms to improve and enhance student learning and engagement.
- Authentic learning strategies were employed throughout programs for junior high students.
- Use of strategies such as alternate spaces, small group and team activities, and the Outdoor Classroom were all implemented.
- Standard based assessment practices were implemented during the school year. This shifted the conversation away from 'what I got to how I am doing.'

Next Steps:
- Implement Deep Learning strategies in the classroom and school wide.
- Seek additional support in Deep learning initiatives to be used in the classroom.
- Consult with Deep Learning Team on a regular basis.
- Use the outdoor classroom approach to enhance student engagement.
- Make learning more exciting and engaging for students.
- Make student learning more authentic and real world based.
- Continue to use SBL for learning and assessment.
- Provide opportunities for students to collaborate with others to solve problems.

- Direct teaching of what determination, perseverance and grit are.
- Incorporate the 6 Cs of 21st century learning each day.

Strategic Issue/ Goal: <u>Improve Collective Efficacy</u>

Objective: Create a safe, caring and inclusive learning environment for all students.

How did you know this was a Strategic Issue/Objective? What evidence did you have?

After analyzing the available data:
- Only 63.6% of students in grade 3 and 4 feel safe in school. This is very alarming for us and we will be looking into what we can do to change this.

Year end Summary of Progress. What evidence do you have to support this progress?

We have established a school wide positive behavior policy that is used daily. We recognize and applaud positive student behavior through the use of "Paws" for positivity. We regularly examine our review 360 data to explore areas of concern and implement practices to ensure that all areas of the school are safe and caring for all students. We have, displayed throughout the school reminders and clearly outlined expectations around student behavior and review these as well with students to ensure understanding and compliance. We celebrate acts of caring daily in our virtual morning meetings and reward students for their effort in keeping our school a safe, caring and inclusive environment. We have an active and involved OH&S committee that meets regularly and addresses school needs to ensure a safe working environment for staff and students. We have begun to implement daily social emotional check ins with students to ensure students feel safe, comfortable and cared for. When things come up, we are able to address them, further explore areas of need and develop a true sense of caring and community for our students.

Next Steps:
- Implement practices to ensure all students feel safe, cared for and included in our school.
- Through OH&S, ensure that the policies and procedures are followed.
- Review behavioral data (review 360) to determine areas of concern
- Engage students in feeling reflections to develop emotional awareness and SEL strategies

Strategic Issue/ Goal: Improve Collective Efficacy

Objective: To improve student engagement

How did you know this was a Strategic Issue/Objective? What evidence did you have?

Our data indicated positivity in student support for learning strategies. However, we continue to evolve in this area and have since become part of the Phase-In process. Therefore we have established the Responsive teaching and Learning methods in our daily instruction.

Year end Summary of Progress. What evidence do you have to support this progress?

Responsive teaching and learning practices are used daily in classes. We have established a Teaching and Learning team for all grades K-8. During these meetings we engage our reading specialist, classroom teachers and instructional resource teachers in problem solving and planning for students who need additional support. We have created and filed RTL plans for students and update them on a regular basis to ensure maximum support and deployment of needed resources to engage students and improve their opportunities for success. We have established a Learning Commons that is used for collaborative student learning as well as a dedicated space for extra support for students.

Next Steps:
- Incorporate Responsive Teaching and Learning strategies into daily practice.
- Establish best practices as it relates to Universal design for Learning and the RTL process for student support.
- Use our learning commons for student support and enjoyment.
- Have regularly scheduled TLT meetings to discuss students, progress and next steps.
- Have set a schedule for our school based reading specialist to maximize student support through RTL - continue to review student progress and make appropriate changes through school based TLTs.
- Collaborate with the school based SDT for student support.
- Teachers will work collaboratively through "team-teaching/ co-teaching" to maximize student support.
- Schedule IRT to provide support when needed within the classroom.

Strategic Issue/ Goal: Improve Collective Efficacy

Objective: To improve student belonging

How did you know this was a Strategic Issue/Objective? What evidence did you have?

School Development Survey Results indicate that this is not an area of focus for us at this time, however the very nature of creating a safe, caring and inclusive school environment speaks to student engagement. We will always continue to ensure we address this to ensure all students feel safe and cared for, all the time.

Year end Summary of Progress. What evidence do you have to support this progress?

Students are engaged in CYN activities weekly in the school. These activities encourage student leadership opportunities that affect all students in the school. Our relationship with the aboriginal community is very positive and celebrated in our school. We have daily smudging for all students to encourage connection and celebration of our student heritage. We have monthly GSA meetings for students as well to encourage inclusiveness, tolerance and recognition of diversity within our school population. Participation Nation events and extracurriculars are provided on a weekly and monthly basis.

Next Steps:
- Schedule CYN opportunities for students.
- Continue with the indigenous Outreach and One Sky programs.
- Continue with the GSA.
- Continue to offer daily smudging for all students.
- Provide education and resources in diversity and inclusiveness.
- Celebrate diversity within the school
- Provide leadership opportunities for students
- Continue to provide Participation Nation opportunities
- Fully utilize the Learning Commons for students and teachers, with instruction and facilitation from the LRT

Strategic Issue/ Goal: <u>Improve Assessment and learning for students</u>

Objective: To improve instruction and assessment practices

How did you know this was a Strategic Issue/Objective? What evidence did you have?

We have selected Assessment Practices as a second area of focus for us this year. We are participating in a SBL - Standards based Learning Pilot project for this school year. This project deals primarily with junior high students. It is anticipated that this opportunity will allow us to more closely look at our assessment practices, which in turn will lead to more engaging instruction. Thus addressing the areas of value, learning strategies and self-efficacy in not only our junior high students, but all students.

The data summarize the following:
- 22.1% of junior high students don't place a great deal of value on school
- 16% of students don't explore learning strategies (goal setting, planning or trying something new)
- 23.4% of students feel as though they do not have the ability to solve complex problems
- 25.3% of junior high students feel as though they don't have the grit to solve problems or work through challenges.

Year end Summary of Progress. What evidence do you have to support this progress?

This is a shift in focus for us at St. Thomas Aquinas. We have been exploring ways to encourage collaboration and connection among students in solving complex problems. We have also been exploring "other - more authentic" methods of assessment for our students in their daily activities. In conjunction with more authentic assessment we have begun to explore more engaging ways to instruct and provide feedback to our students, with their direct involvement in how we go about doing this. We have begun to allow students to direct their own learning and assessment.

Next Steps:

- Continue educational discussions around SBL for staff, students and the school community.
- Establish standards to assess junior high students' performance in the curriculum.
- Make assessment and instructional practices connect to the outside world.
- Ensure student self assessment opportunities
- Provide deeper and more authentic feedback to students on their performance.
- Provide more challenging learning opportunities for students.
- Direct teaching of what it takes to plan, set goals and work through challenges.
- Work collaboratively with program specialists in providing direction for standards based assessment.
- Create an appropriate system of progressions to use when assessing students.

- Ensure that staff, students and the school community know the progressions and understand how they will be applied to student assessment moving forward.