

Section One

Epiphany of Our Lord School completed its self-study and was evaluated by the Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges in March, 2002.

At the end of three years, the school faculty chose the option of completing an online description of the school for the DOAS. We submitted this description in lieu of a three year report. We have since updated the DOAS entry in May, 2009.

Section Two

The Process to complete this report

The faculty, fourteen in all, met to discuss our progress on the action plan in November, 2008, and in January, April and May, 2009. The faculty evaluated the progress on our goals, updated reports and decided where the action plan needed adjustment.

Committees were formed with the following assignments:

The **Science Teachers Committee** had charge of summarizing their weekly reports and evaluating the use of the hands-on activities they performed with their classes.

A **Communications Committee** was in charge of reporting our efforts to the school and surrounding community. They also put the action plan monitoring reports together and collated feedback from former students and secondary school faculty.

A **Resources and Replenishment Committee** updated an inventory of science materials in the science lab. They examined and replenished all science lab kits.

A **Writing Committee** assumed responsibility for drafting the Sixth Year Report and submitting it to the faculty for approval.

This report was shared with the community by placing it on the school website at www.eols.org. The report was submitted to the Home and School Association on May 3, 2009.

An account of our efforts was published in the *EOL Times*, the family newsletter, and in the Epiphany of Our Lord Church bulletin. We also submitted an account to the local newspaper, *The Times Herald*.

Section Three

Progress on Strategic Goal Implementation

Goal statement: We will create a balance between hands-on science and traditional teaching styles (lecture, textbook, handouts, diagrams, presentation of vocabulary, and note taking) to ensure optimal student comprehension of the Archdiocesan Science Guidelines at each grade level between September and June of a given year.

To increase the school community's interest in science, we have completed the following:

- ? Broad science themes for schoolwide attention have highlighted each school year since 2001. Students' attention has been focused on topics such as Inventions and Innovations, Plants, Weather, Astronomy, Health, Nutrition, Animals, Marine Life, Physical Fitness, the Human Body, and Earth Phenomena. The use of guest speakers, prizes awarded for answering daily questions centered on the topic, and attractive hallway displays spark interest in the current theme.
- ? All grades presently use newly purchased science textbooks that more closely follow the Archdiocesan guidelines and provide more hands-on learning opportunities.
- ? Students from K-8 participate in hands-on science activities whenever practicable. Successful activities are predicated on sufficient background knowledge being imparted, but may also be used as an exciting lead-in to understanding of "the big idea". Hands-on activities are an integral and regular part of the school's science program.
- ? Teachers use a modified science curriculum for students in need of special accommodation. Students who qualify are identified by diagnostic testing and by standardized testing results. The Archdiocese permits modified grading for these students.
- ? Logistics of lab use has been resolved. Grades K-4 employ the lab at any time on Monday. Grades 5-8 use the room for regular classroom instruction and lab work the remainder of the week.
- ? Five of the six science teachers in the school have completed science workshops or courses since 2001. The Grade 5-8 departmental science teacher received a certificate in science from the state of Ohio.

That the Science Committee of the school will increase its participation in supporting a successful science program in the school, the following has occurred:

- ? The Science Committee developed, approved and submitted to the Home and School Association a mission statement defining its role.
- ? Representatives are assigned to each class to assist the faculty in acquiring low cost materials and resources that support the program.
- ? The Science Committee has increased its membership by 10%.

- ? Secondary school teachers were contacted to identify their expectations of incoming freshmen graduating from Epiphany of Our Lord School. High school science teachers emphasized the importance of preparing students to write lab reports and to convert metric measurements.
- ? A survey of our graduates in high school to evaluate their readiness for secondary school science indicated that the science fair was of assistance to them. They also stressed the value of completing lab reports.

To establish a plan of action for a summer science camp, the following objectives were accomplished:

- ? Faculty members worked with the science committee to establish a summer science camp for students in K-8 as a source of funding for future science expenses and to extend their understanding of the subject area. The summer science camp has operated every year since 2001.
- ? Local business and institutional resources were contacted to enlist support for the program. They have proffered scientific supplies such as agar plates, chemicals, tools and allowed the camp to make use of incubators.
- ? Student interest in the camp has remained strong. The program which corresponds with Archdiocesan guidelines is geared for grades K-8.
- ? Each year, volunteers help with the registration of campers and the operation of the camp.
- ? Enrollment is capped at twenty-five students.
- ? The success of the summer science camp has provided a source of funds for the Home and School science committee to pay for expenses of the annual science fair, to fund Franklin Institute assemblies and to run a series of Earth Day outdoor activities by Green Lane Nature Center.

To enable the science lab to function as a resource center for the entire school community and to increase its frequent utilization, the following objectives have been met:

- ? A catalog of all useable materials, tools, kits, and chemicals in the science lab has been distributed to the faculty.
- ? The school has compiled a video library of tapes on science themes
- ? Technology resources have markedly progressed within the school since 2001. Eleven classrooms use computer projectors in conjunction with the internet. The teachers make extensive use of streaming to project complete videos or video segments from Discovery Education's ample holdings. The faculty decided not to pursue the use of Comcast Cable Company's services to develop a video library since the use of Discovery Education video-on-demand services was more efficient and cost-effective. No storage of tapes was necessary.
- ? Teachers of lower grades have a day set aside for their use of the science lab. All grades presently have access to the lab.

Improved results on Terra Nova testing and participation in local science competitions are objectives that have not been met.

- ? At present, these goals have not been successfully met due to the lack of continuity in the crucial position of departmental Grade 5-8 science. Grades 5-8 are completely departmentalized in the subject areas of ILA, Mathematics, Social Studies and Science. Since 2001, in contrast to the stability of the rest of the faculty, five teachers have held the position of the Grade 5-8 science teacher. Turnover in this part-time position has occurred because of ill health, desire for a change in grade, more lucrative employment in public school, and adoption of an infant. Two teachers left Epiphany's employment in midyear. We believe that this lack of continuity has hindered our ability to make significant progress in improving Terra Nova scores across four grade levels and in making more efforts to broaden science fair competition.
- ? The school's participation in the Montgomery County Envirothon, formerly known as the Ecomeet, is now contingent on proximity of the chosen site for the competition. Transportation for longer distances is no longer provided by the bus company.
- ? Students in Grades 7 and 8 continue to compete in the National Science League competition.

The school's efforts to seek additional resources to make science an area of strength have not yet been wholly met.

Goals not met:

- ? The awarding of a Toyota science grant is conditional upon the project director being a science teacher who is employed for the project's duration and who instructs more than one science class. The Grade 5-8 science teacher is the sole faculty member who qualifies. Turnover in the position has made success in winning a grant unattainable at present.
- ? The Bayer USA Foundation will not fund religious organizations. .
- ? The school has not reached the point where we can field a team for the Pennsylvania Science Olympiad.

Goals met:

- ? Science Summer Camp runs for one week for grades K-8. This program has been successful from the outset.
- ? The faculty and science committee modified the goal of a school science club opting to use the services of *Mad Science* because of its successful, organized and imaginative approach to science enrichment

Improvements in the school resulting from implementation of the plan:

- ? The school has continuously emphasized science topics within the school environment with each year's schoolwide themes
- ? Technology improvements, notably use of computer projectors and internet access, have significantly improved instruction and learning opportunities across all curriculum areas including science.
- ? Hands-on activities spark student interest in science and entail more student involvement in the learning process.
- ? Science Camp joins Good Stewards Camp and Vacation Bible School as three ways in which all students within the parish may experience wholesome, positive and fun activities during their summer break.
- ? The self-study and action plan has resulted in better management of science lab use and in making its ample resource materials and equipment available to the entire school.
- ? Feedback from surveys of graduates of Epiphany of Our Lord School and from secondary school science teachers has proven helpful in redirecting our attention to necessary science skills that apply to other academic areas. For example, surveys indicated a need to focus more on the metric system in Mathematics, writing a report in ILA and creating and analyzing graphs in Social Studies.
- ? Students enjoy field trips to Lankenau Hospital, the Franklin Institute and Linville Orchards.

The school has expanded its resources significantly as a result of the self-study. Improvements include the following:

- ? New electrical wiring in the classrooms to improve networking and utility of A/V devices
- ? Wall-mounted televisions, DVD players and VCRs placed in all classrooms
- ? Purchase of overhead projectors with projectable calculators
- ? Computers placed in all classrooms
- ? Teacher training in technology and methods accomplished via a Connelly grant
- ? Purchase of new software
- ? Computer networking of the school to facilitate communication as well as access to data and the internet
- ? School website established to improve communication between school and home
- ? Eleven projectors and pull down screens to allow students easy viewing of Power point presentations and internet websites
- ? Interactive smart boards permitting use of educational software and of the internet
- ? Digital video-on-demand and online teaching services of Discovery Education streaming
- ? Updating of technology in the library with three computer work stations that are internet and network ready
- ? Updating the inventory of useable materials in the science lab
- ? Replenishment of science kit materials in the science lab

- ? Collection of Gold Seal lessons in science
- ? Collection of *Mailbox* science lesson plans and activities sorted by topic

Section Four

New Goals

- ? To direct more effort to improving Terra Nova scores, the faculty decided to make a concerted attempt to give our students the necessary background information to make informed judgments on Terra Nova test questions. We will ensure that each grade has been taught the requisite topics examined at each grade level for the test.
- ? To present a varied approach in understanding how to analyze diagrams, graphs, timelines, data tables and the like, we will emphasize these skills across the curricula in ILA, Social Studies, Science and Mathematic
- ? The faculty will utilize the series *Higher Scores on Science Standardized Tests in Grades 2-6* within the ILA program
- ? A collection of science lesson plans from *The Mailbox* will be divided by topic and kept in the faculty room for reference. One copy will go to the classroom in which the topic is covered and a second copy will remain in the faculty room for future reference.
- ? We will make better use of the resources at the MCIU Teacher Center by copying and collecting applicable lesson plans and activities from their extensive files
- ? A list of Bill Nye the Science Guy videodiscs available through the county library system will be compiled and distributed to the faculty
- ? A catalog of Bill Nye the Science Guy shows filmed in 2008 and available from Discovery Education streaming will be distributed to the faculty
- ? We will join NRG to improve Wellness Plan and provide resources for implementation
- ? This September we begin a study group for Grade 7 using *Peterson's Mastering the Catholic High School Entrance Exams* as a test preparation method. This should impact on Terra Nova scores.
- ? To take advantage of programs offered by Montgomery County Health Department, we will provide teachers with a list of topics that are presented by the agency.

Section Five

School Status

Sponsorship, ownership or control of the school

Epiphany of Our Lord is a parochial elementary school sponsored by the parish of Epiphany of Our Lord Church and operated under the auspices of the Archdiocese of

Philadelphia. The principal works in conjunction with the pastor of the parish who is ultimately responsible for the operation of the school.

Community and school population

Epiphany of Our Lord School operates within portions of the communities of Whitpain, Plymouth and East Norriton townships in the northern suburbs of Philadelphia. The student population is 197 students.

School organization and finances

The basic organizational structure for learning is as follows:

- ? A self-contained Preschool for three years old meets twice a week for 2 ½ hours.
- ? Preschool for four years old is also self-contained. Parents may choose from a three or five day week, whole day or half day.
- ? Kindergarten functions as a full day, self-contained unit.
- ? Grades 1 to 4 are self-contained classrooms.
- ? Grades 5 to 8 are completely departmentalized and work together as a unit.
- ? All grades receive special classes in Computer, Music and Physical Education.
- ? Grades 1 to 8 receive instruction in Italian.

Administration and faculty

The school employs sixteen teachers in addition to the principal and school secretary. Eleven teachers hold full-time positions while five fill part-time positions. The part-time employees teach Science, Music, Gym, Italian and a Pre-school class. A full-time aide assists with the Pre-4 program and a part-time aide works with the Pre-3 program.

Facilities and physical resources

The school, located on a two and a half acre site, consists of a two story brick building and an adjoining gymnasium/cafeteria and kitchen. The school maintains fourteen classrooms, administrative offices, a computer lab, science lab, library, art room, health room, religion resources room, music room, parish meeting rooms, and an IU services room.

Curricular and extracurricular offerings

Our primary mission is to teach Catholic doctrine and to impart the Gospel message of love of God, self and neighbor. Teaching of religion, therefore, permeates every subject across the curriculum. The Archdiocesan Office of Catholic Education curriculum guidelines form the basis of instruction in each subject area and outlines skills to be taught in all grades.

The core subjects of Religion, Integrated Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies and Science are taught at each grade level. Honors Math is offered to students who qualify in Grades 4-8. Children attend weekly classes in Italian, Art, Music, Physical Education and Technology. Classroom teaching is supplemented through the use of the Library, Science Lab, Computer Lab, Art Room and Religious/Reference Room. In addition, the Montgomery County Intermediate Unit supplies small group or individual instruction in Reading, Speech, Math and Language.

Sacramental programs, weekly liturgy, retreats and prayer partner activities are integral parts of our religious formation program. Participation in contests and competitions is encouraged; namely, an annual science fair, the National Geographic Bee, Reading Olympics, Spelling bees, Language, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies League contests. The school sponsors clubs in Knitting, Book Club, Youth Respect Life, Study Group and Student Council. Students may take part in Mad Science, Daisies, Brownies, Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts, Choir, Youth Ministry and CYO sports. In the summer, Vacation Bible School, Good Stewards Camp and Science Camp are offered.