

**St. Francis of Assisi School
School Improvement Advisory Committee
2008 -2009**

**Middle School Success Focus Area
Final Report
June 11, 2009**

Focus Area

The 2008-2009 School Improvement Committee (SIAC) choose three focus areas for priority work. Middle School Success was a focus area determined by the Committee to be of substantial importance to the future of St. Francis School and interfaced well with another focus area designed to gain parent perceptions by survey, parent satisfaction.

Methods

The Committee began with a clean slate regarding validated impressions of middle school success. Early in this Committee's formation, members agreed that decisions should be data-driven as possible and that the Committee should review the rich research resources already available.

The following reports were well understood and the lessons learned from them identified **before** further designing the work for this focus area:

1. Basic Student and Staff Profiles
2. Iowa Test of Basic Skills Scores (trended over time)
3. Annual Achievement Goals Results
4. Technology Plan Progress Report
5. Positive Behavior Supports Survey Results
6. Student Support Report
7. National Middle School Association Performance-Based Standards for Middle School Teachers

Finally the Committee identified the attributes of the definition of "middle school success" and set out to identify specific measurements associated with those attributes. After review of as much quantitative information as available, including the results of the Parent Satisfaction Survey, the Committee formed recommendations for each attribute.

Results

The Committee identified six attributes of a successful St. Francis Middle School:

1. Healthy Academics
2. Healthy Social Skills
3. Healthy Faith Formation
4. Healthy Transition From Middle School to High School
5. Healthy Application of Skills and Critical Thinking
6. Healthy Expectation for Life Long Learning

While understanding and acknowledging the imperfections, the Committee identified the following quantifiable measures for each of the attributes:

Healthy Academics

- ITBS Scores
- 6th Grade Diocesan Exemplar Scores
- 8th Grade Diocesan Science Test Scores
- SFA Graduates in Dowling Advanced and AP Classes v. Total
- SFA Graduates on Dowling Honor Roll
- SFA Graduates on Dowling Honor Roll vs. Total

Healthy Social Skills

- Parent Satisfaction Survey Data
- Detentions
- Merits

Healthy Faith Preparation

- Service Hours
- Parent Satisfaction Survey Data

Healthy Transition From Middle School to High School

- Academic Success
 - SFA Graduates on Dowling Honor Roll
 - SFA Graduates on Dowling Honor Roll vs. Total
- Social Success
 - SFA Graduate Participation in Dowling Sports/Clubs/Social Initiatives vs. Total

Healthy Application of Skills and Critical Thinking

- Parent Satisfaction Survey Data

Healthy Expectation for Life Long Learning

- SFA Graduates Attending College
- SFA Graduates in Dowling Advanced and AP Classes v. Total

All of the scores are intended for review over time. The trend of any measurement is often more important than the actual number. The Committee attempted to find other comparable benchmarks such as Des Moines or Iowa scores for the measures. Few were identified beyond the ITBS scores.

The results of the measures are found in the attached report “Middle School Success Focus Area - Results and Recommendations.”

Recommendations

Recommendations for improvement in middle school success follow. They are repeated in the attached report “Middle School Success Focus Area - Results and Recommendations” for ease of understanding.

Healthy Academics

1. Track Dowling statistics of SFA graduates over time to observe change.
2. **Create and implement communication plan for various audiences, especially parents and prospective parents, that “sets the bar” and expectation for the high level of curriculum rigor intended at SFA.**
3. While an excellent tool for teachers and administrators, Standards and Benchmarks as defined are overwhelming and “too much” information for parents as a useful tool to judge their child’s performance. Maximize high priority points and minimize information distributed displaying all of the Standards and Benchmarks.

Healthy Social Skills

1. Track detentions over time to observe change.
2. **Completely revise the discipline program to lessen infractions for academic issues (as opposed to behavioral) and review infraction penalties for level of concern. Consider whether the program needs to be somehow gender-specific in rewards and penalties.**
3. Review the parent communication plan for the detention system and consider ongoing communication vehicles for improved understanding.
4. Develop merit reward program and track results over time.

Healthy Faith Preparation

1. Consider an 8th Grade selective individual “exit” interview process that could include at least a subjective measure of the student’s self-realization of faith preparation. The process could also include structured requests for candid opportunities for improvement and/or measurement of other more subjective areas for tracking.
2. **Revise the service program to include incentives and recognition for various levels. Move the program from a “negative” minimum to a “positive” reward system for participation.**

Healthy Transition From Middle School to High School

1. Continue to track over time.
2. **Develop an SFA middle school honor roll as a transition to real life expectations for performance and as a motivational tool.** An SFA honor roll could include more than the classic grade point average as a determining factor for making the honor roll. The honor roll could include the service hour program and/or other factors intended for reward within the school system. The SFA honor roll could be developed as a tool for student aspiration in multiple areas of development as preparation for success in high school and life. Consideration should be given to another name such as “merit recognition roll”.

Healthy Application of Skills and Critical Thinking


1. **Focus a portion of the 6th through 8th grade curriculum on organizational and study skills. Add organizational and study skills to Standards and Benchmarks system.** The “one size fits all” current system doesn’t fit all students. Move the focus to multiple learning and organizational methods. (Quote of the meeting: “The SFA approach seems to focus on the motivated, organized, intelligent female student.”)

Healthy Expectation for Life Long Learning

1. Develop longitudinal tracking system to track college attendance and success for SFA middle school graduates.
2. **Begin to consider development of an alumni program for adult graduates of SFA middle school.**

The Committee would like the Board of Education and School Administration to trend the identified measures over time. This report is only a starting place and hopefully assists the School in establishing a “performance dashboard” that can be monitored for the middle school over ensuing years.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'W. Havekost'.

William P. Havekost
Chair, 2008-2009 SIAC

Members of the 2008-2009 SIAC include Pat Berrie, Tom Bowman, Mike Caligiuri, Lisa Donnelly, Nick Farley, Peggy Greenfield, Misty Hade, Sarah Harmeyer, Roberta Harvey, Mary Head, Tricia Hoffman, Gail Koerner, Mackenzie Lee, Jolene Lensing, Kerry LeWarne, Tom Mallisee, Brian Waggoner, Megan Weisenhorn and Katherine Wenman.

The Committee sincerely appreciates the assistance of Dowling Catholic High School officials in sharing statistics found within their databases.