

Writing Samples for Visiting Committee Final Reports

There is no doubt in the Visiting Committee's mind that School has a vision, mission and values package that is not only understood but widely disseminated so that it does colour the practice of most areas and constituencies of the school. Fairly recent work has significantly increased the profile of the Strategic Plan and the school is to be congratulated on the very tangible attempts that are being made to keep the plan alive, vibrant and measurable.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

There is a strong belief in the value of service on a local, national and global level. The school strives to engage in local service activities, although this is a challenge and remains an area of focus. Recently, a Service Learning Coordinator has been named to evaluate and improve this aspect of school life. Immediate goals include focusing upon local service initiatives that create connections between students and the local community rather than focusing on fundraising exclusively, tracking student service hours more effectively, and creating more opportunities for other staff and faculty to get involved in contributing to service initiatives.

The Visiting Committee suggests adding service hours on report cards so that students, parents and Advisor teachers know how a child is progressing, and also having students complete a self-reflection after completing their service in order to assess the benefits and continuation of a particular activity.

The Visiting Committee congratulates School on their recent school-wide initiative to walk into town picking up garbage along the way. This Earth Day activity reflects the importance of being good neighbours and the value placed on environmental awareness.

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

Though there was evident attention given to recycling and energy issues within the classrooms, one suggestion here is that the school looks via its environment committee at environmental awareness more generally, perhaps by having a faculty member sponsor a “Green Club” as a vehicle for student involvement in local and global issues of sustainability.

The Visiting Committee suggests that the school look at ways to increase environmental awareness in the student body and provide more opportunities for direct involvement and leadership.

CO-CURRICULAR PROGRAMS

In addition to all the opportunities presented at the physical activity level the School provides a wide spectrum of other extra-curricular activities. Once again, for a small school the list of activities and clubs is quite broad and there is potentially something of interest for each and every student. As is common in school, finding enough time in one’s day to fit in all facets of school life can be challenging, but the encouragement is certainly there on the school’s part.

The Visiting Committee commends the School for its breadth of opportunities in co-curricular programs (athletics, arts, clubs etc.); 100% of students are engaged.

The Visiting Committee suggests that the School review the staffing of co-curricular programs, particularly in athletics, as there are a few teachers who are quite stretched, overseeing many teams.

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

School has policies and procedures in place to provide and maintain a positive, safe and secure learning environment. There are clear policies regarding the acceptable ethical code that aligns with the mission of the school. These policies include the Code of Conduct and policies with respect to expectations of conduct, integrity, attendance, respect for human rights, duty to report abuse, harassment, student and school safety, playground safety, respect for the environment, homework, uniform, CISAA code of sportsmanship, and the acceptable use of IT.

These policies and expectations are informed by the Ministry of Education’s definitions of diversity and equity and are also reflected in parts of the school’s vision and mission.

The policies clearly set out school expectations for student behaviour and conduct, including, but not restricted to, harassment, respect for property, prohibitions on use, possession, and distribution of alcohol and drugs, academic honesty and attendance. These policies and expectations are communicated to the faculty, parents and students annually and include parent electronic sign-off and student sign-off procedures.

School emphasizes progressive discipline with a continuum of interventions to address and promote positive student behaviour. An infraction of the Code of Conduct falls within the jurisdiction of the Principal.

School has completed a significant amount of research on anti-bullying and has a clear policy for reporting and managing bullying. This includes peer support groups and special awareness events and assemblies during anti-bullying awareness week.

The School Code of Conduct is reviewed annually and the policies and procedures with respect to expectations and behaviour are reviewed on an as needed basis by the senior leadership team. School has policies and procedures in place to provide and maintain a positive, safe and secure learning environment.

COMMUNICATIONS

The school has extensive and impressive print and electronic communication within the school and with all constituencies of the school. In addition, the school provides multiple ways for parents and other constituents to communicate with faculty and staff. Because of the many modes of communication, the volume of communication received can be challenging.

RECOMMENDATION

That the school conduct a communications audit to help streamline communication.

DECISION MAKING PROCESS

There is considerable sharing of information as it relates to decision-making taking place in the various areas of responsibility in the school. The Board functions effectively with a number of committees and engages the appropriate staff to share information and ideas in areas where strategic and operating efforts intersect. Similarly, the members of the Leadership Team appear to engage their direct reports in a significant manner to analyze and give input into decisions made at the various levels.

The Visiting Committee commends The Parents' Association and Alumni Association for their leadership and strong work to gather feedback from their members and make decisions reflecting the feedback and the school's strategic objectives. Each group utilizes a combination of face-to-face and digital communication to ensure they are well informed.

There are opportunities for students to provide their ideas and feedback in an ongoing fashion. Nonetheless, as noted in the Internal Report, it appears that the greatest challenge is to constitute the proper membership for committees to balance the feedback and thinking required to make decisions that reach across the various divisions. As a consequence, there appears to be a lack of continuous and planned alignment as it relates to the overall learning experience of students moving through the school.

The Visiting Committee suggests that the Head of School and Leadership team review the mandate and membership of various committees as they relate to decision making in order to create a more united and effective team to successfully address decisions in a manner that improves vertical communication and alignment from one division to the next in order to enhance the year to year learning and experience of each student as he or she progresses through the school.

QUALITY OF WORK LIFE

The positive, caring culture of the school with courteous students who enjoy excellent relationships with their teachers/coaches attest to a positive faculty culture and quality of work life.

The Visiting Committee commends the Headmaster on his leadership, priorities and new initiatives that are being well received. The teachers speak very highly of the Headmaster.

The quality of work life is superb in the Junior School and the Senior School requires attention which is common in most schools. The faculty are generally

accepting their salaries currently at 93% of the public school grid, and the faculty's greatest desire is for more time for collaboration with other teachers and professional development. Improvements in facilities, professional development, and school and Board leadership are appreciated by the community. The support of parents and the alumni are appreciated.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board investigate increased revenue strategies including fees to provide the resources and an increased budget to provide comparable compensation with public schools over a period of time.

ENROLMENT MANAGEMENT

The school has a retention committee that takes ad hoc feedback from teachers and the Division Heads; the school attrition rate is around the CAIS average; however there is some concern regarding attrition from JK to K according to the Executive Director. It was evident to the Visiting Committee that the Admissions department carefully considers its transition years and takes a proactive approach to retention and enrolment management.

The Visiting Committee suggests that the Admissions Department lay out a more formal retention plan for its transition years to assist in supporting and enhancing the re-enrolment rates.

The Visiting Committee saw evidence of important data analysis and this will be important work going forward to assist with strategic and tactical decisions. It would be of great benefit to the school to be able to have a database or set of tools to leverage their ability.

All things considered including demographics and a weak economy, it was evident to the Visiting Committee that School has done very well over the last several years. Despite there being a tremendous amount of leadership transition as well as competition from neighbouring schools, the school has worked very hard to consider opportunities for strategic recruitment.

BUDGET & PLANNING

The financial plan is aligned with the strategic plan and a three-year planning process is in place for the operational plan although the changing assumptions (tied to strategic initiatives) over a three-year period could be more clearly articulated in the plan document itself. There is also a three-year capital plan but again, the major assumptions and clear alignment with the strategic plan could be more clearly articulated as an integrated part of the document. The Finance office is focused on the Strategic Plan but many of the plan's elements may not have a financial impact. There has been increased oversight by the Finance Committee and Human Resources Committee regarding additional staff members (FTEs) and as salary costs are the major component of the school's budget, this emphasis is appropriate.

The Visiting Committee suggests that the presentation of the multi-year Operational and Capital Financial Plans could have a clearer correlation to the Strategic Plan, even if it is simply to indicate that there are limited financial implications in the Strategic Plan. The plans could be presented to the Board in a format that is more intuitive for non-financial managers with more focus on the assumptions and bottom line results and less spreadsheet detail.

RISK MANAGEMENT

The School has started to develop a risk document; however, it is in the early stages and it mainly deals with crisis management. The Board does not have a risk tolerance statement and there is no evidence that risk tolerances have been defined for the different activities and programs. The current document does not have detailed information regarding risk management for transporting of students or activities. In addition, the school does not have formalized policies with regards to the both the educational and risk management issues for off-site excursions.

RECOMMENDATION

That the school and the Board determine a risk tolerance statement and define the risk tolerance for all activities and programs.

RECOMMENDATION

That the school finalize their risk documentation, including off-site excursions and that this be communicated to faculty, staff, students and parents.

OFF-SITE EXCURSIONS

As part of the experiential component of School there are many trips offered to students both locally, provincially, nationally and internationally. Before offering a trip, research is done by a given staff member (usually the individual who will head up the trip) and trip details are submitted to the division principal or executive team for approval.

If it is a local trip the teacher may visit the location, assess whether additional supervision is needed and assess any risks that need to be communicated to parents. This is summarized on the Elements of Risk form and is signed off by parents. If the trip is further afield the school will investigate as to whether there is an organization the school can partner with, what the risks of travel to a given area are based on discussions with the consulate as well as in consultation with other schools or groups who may have already done this excursion. Again all risks are listed on the Element of Risk form and signed off by parents. Per discussion with staff when using a third party company, the School demands that it must control the travel arrangements.

It is noted that in prior years the Elements of Risk form was reviewed by legal counsel to ensure that it was appropriately limiting the risks of the school. That approved legal form is now used as the basis for all other Elements of Risk forms. In reviewing the Element of Risk form for both local and international trips it is noted that they are prepared with due diligence and all potential risks appear to be covered.

Additionally, when any trip is made off campus, the supervising principal or director ensures that appropriate ratios are maintained and that at least one supervisor has first aid training. For an international trip, the same is true however external guides are also hired which know the local culture, safety issues as well as how to navigate any emergency situation. School ratios of staff to students do not factor in guides or external facilitators in order to provide the strongest level of supervision.

The Visiting Committee suggests that School consider creating a formal procedure to evaluate all excursions.

PROVIDES FOR DIVERSE NEEDS

There are 28 different nationalities represented within the student body at School and the school makes excellent provision for the individual needs of this diverse population. Students are well supported in their language needs and the program makes sensible adjustments for the age and gender of students. The school cherishes its diversity and works hard to ensure equal access and equity in all areas of school life.

The Visiting Committee commends the school for its excellent work in promoting equity and diversity.