



Immaculate Conception School Vision Document, 2018-2023

December 8, 2017

Introduction

Immaculate Conception School (IC) was established in 1981 through the dedication, hard work, and talents of Pastors, Religious Sisters (Mercy Sisters of Ireland and Domano Sisters), Frontier Apostles, parishioners, students, staff and the Diocese of Prince George. In the same year that the school celebrated its twenty-fifth year of operations, School Council approved the first vision document, and a second vision document followed in 2012. Both of these documents served the school and parish community well for their respective five-year terms.

At the request of Immaculate Conception School Council, a vision committee convened in November 2016 to begin the process of producing a vision document that will help guide the school until 2023. The committee was comprised of the following individuals:

Jennifer Begg (Parent Support Group);
Hayden Drygas (School Staff);
Neil Hanlon (School Council & Vision Committee Chair);
Bill Hellyer (Parish Council);
Arleta Lucarelli (School Council);
Father Chris Lynch (Pastor); and,
Donncha O'Callaghan (School Principal from 2004-17).

As IC school seeks to keep alive and renew the culture of the sacred in a profane and secular world, and in the face of broad changes in provincial curriculum, a diversifying student body, and transitions in school staff and administration, the need for a Vision Document remains as relevant as ever. The 2018-23 Vision Document is therefore an expression of who we are as a school and faith community, and what we collectively strive to become in the next five years.

Guidance

The Vision Committee was fortunate to begin its work soon after the release of the Pastoral Letter on Catholic Schools, signed by all five Bishops of British Columbia on 4 November 2016 (a copy of the letter is available in the Vision Committee Final Report). The committee took inspiration especially from the letter's call to teach "to the whole person."

At each stage in the production of the Vision Document, the committee sought affirmation from Bishop Stephen Jensen and Superintendent Chris Dugdale, the faith and educational leaders in the Diocese of Prince George. The committee was encouraged to align IC's vision to the more universal goal of promoting the physical, emotional, moral and spiritual dimensions of human development by inspiring students to live the sacramental life, to grow in the moral life, and to thrive intellectually.

The committee was also mindful to align its work with CIS-PG's revised Mission and Vision Statements, as approved by the Board of Directors on March 16, 2017.

Catholic Independent Schools of the Diocese of Prince George

Mission: To promote the integral formation of students in all areas of learning, enlightened by Faith in Jesus Christ, to enable them to become responsible citizens and disciples who participate in the life of the mission of the Church to build the Kingdom of God in the world.

Vision: Parents, pastors, and staff collaborate to form a community where students are inspired to live the Sacramental life, to grow in the moral life of virtue and to thrive intellectually.

With this guidance, the Vision Committee set out to create a vision for Immaculate Conception School that upholds the evangelical mission of Catholic schools and its special role, together with the wider Parish community, in helping support parents in the transmission of the Catholic faith to their children.

Consultation

The Vision Committee consulted widely to inform its strategic thinking and visioning. The committee created opportunities for students and parents (past and present), parishioners, staff, and School Council to help us clarify school values and priorities.

Principal O'Callaghan met with staff on a number of occasions to invite input about various aspects of the vision exercise, including a review of the school's mission and philosophy, the identification of unfinished or ongoing priority areas from the current vision document, and thoughts about specific resource needs arising from the transition to a new curriculum. This input suggested that the integration of new technologies in the classroom requires ongoing oversight and commitment, that the need for multipurpose space remains a top priority, and that particular upgrades are needed within (i.e., washrooms and fountains) and outside (i.e., playground) the school building.

A questionnaire was distributed to alumni, parents, parishioners, and staff in both digital (online) and hard copy format in February 2017. The purpose was to collect information about preferences, values, experiences, and priorities from across the Immaculate Conception community. We were most grateful to receive 115 completed questionnaires.

We also administered an online survey to intermediate students (grades four to seven) to give current students an opportunity to lend their voices in shaping the future of Immaculate Conception School. We received 85 completed student questionnaires.

A comprehensive summary of the results of the general and student surveys are available in the Vision Committee Final Report.

Finally, the committee provided monthly updates to School Council, and received approval of its final report and recommendations on September 6, 2017.

A Vision for Immaculate Conception School

Our School Philosophy

To provide a well-rounded education that will enable each individual student to develop spiritually, emotionally, physically, and intellectually according to his or her abilities and talents.

To promote and convey our Catholic faith tradition, fostering in each individual a spirit of love of God and neighbour, expressed in a prayerful, sacramental and virtuous life.

These goals will be reflected in all the programs of the school community to positively influence the parish and the wider community in which we carry out our mission as the Church.

Our Vision

Students will be supported and nurtured in all aspects of their education and development through the collaborative efforts of parents, Pastor, staff, and parishioners of the Immaculate Conception faith community.

Recommendations

Based on consultations with key stakeholders, and consistent with the school's mission, the committee identified a number of activities, organized in seven areas of focus (i.e., programs, students, parents, staff, facilities, parish, community). In order to offer guidance to School Council, the committee made recommendations about when to embark on each activity, and how council should approach each activity based on the expected benefits of the activity (or, the level of "need" from the activity) and the anticipated level of additional organizational effort required to implement the activity. That is, we suggest that council ACCELERATE activities that promise a greater benefit with little additional effort, and STRATEGIZE about how to implement highly beneficial activities that will involve greater added effort. In the case of activities already underway that yield moderate benefits, the committee recommends that council MAINTAIN its current practices, whereas it should DELAY activities that will require considerable additional effort with only a modest anticipation of benefit under current conditions.

Area of Focus and Activity	Year	Suggested Approach
PROGRAMS		
Faith Development		
Ongoing review of IC Faith in Action plan	2018/19	ACCELERATE
Continue acknowledging the visible presence of our Pastor	2018/19	ACCELERATE
Advocate to re-establish a Director of Religious Education	2018/19	STRATEGIZE
Develop opportunities to support parents as first educators of their children in the faith	2018/19	STRATEGIZE
Advocate to establish a Diocesan-wide learning standard	2019/20	STRATEGIZE
Review resources relative to goals, objectives, and practices	2019/20	STRATEGIZE
Expanded and/or enhanced programming		
French (intermediate grade specialist)	2020/21	STRATEGIZE
Physical education (full time)	2020/21	STRATEGIZE
Music (specialists options like band, choir, musical theatre)	2020/21	STRATEGIZE
Library computer-based researcher	2020/21	STRATEGIZE
Resource renewal plan		
New curriculum needs	2018/19	STRATEGIZE
Information technology	2019/20	STRATEGIZE
Extracurricular activities		
Create a balance in offerings (e.g., sports, arts, faith, service) and scheduling to “teach to the whole person”	2018/19	MAINTAIN
Learning support		
Expanded sensory program	2018/19	ACCELERATE

Area of Focus and Activity	Year	Suggested Approach
Re-establish the counseling position	2020/21	STRATEGIZE
STUDENTS		
Plan for enhanced engagement (e.g., reduced absence, reduced late admissions)	2018/19	ACCELERATE
Review of dress code & uniform suppliers	2018/19	ACCELERATE
Continue to foster international student recruitment, establish a registry of homesteading parents	2018/19	STRATEGIZE
Recruitment planning (use of targeted marketing, social media)	2018/19	STRATEGIZE
Retention planning	2022/23	DELAY
PARENTS		
Recognition of parent participation	2018/19	ACCELERATE
Promotion of voluntarism and parent engagement	2018/19	STRATEGIZE
Commitment to fundraising (expanded, better distribution)	2018/19	STRATEGIZE
Opportunities to evangelize and catechize	2020/21	STRATEGIZE
STAFF		
Opportunities for faith development, personal faith commitment	2018/19	ACCELERATE
Active involvement in parish activities	2018/19	ACCELERATE
Information technology (especially PD support and release time)	2018/19	STRATEGIZE
Recruitment and retention plans	2018/19	STRATEGIZE
Development of succession plans	2018/19	STRATEGIZE
Staff appreciation activities (tied to parent voluntarism)	2018/19	STRATEGIZE
Promotion of mentorship with peers	2018/19	MAINTAIN

Area of Focus and Activity	Year	Suggested Approach
Continue to foster and maintain UNBC partnerships	2018/19	MAINTAIN
Continue to foster dialogue between staff and School Council	2018/19	MAINTAIN
FACILITIES		
Fields and grounds improvement plan	2018/19	STRATEGIZE
Water fountains	2020/21	STRATEGIZE
Windows replacement plan	2021/22	STRATEGIZE
Multi-purpose facility	2022/23	STRATEGIZE
Parking lot safety (walkway or path from street to school)	2018/19	MAINTAIN
Review of maintenance log	2018/19	MAINTAIN
PARISH		
Ongoing coordination with other councils	2018/19	MAINTAIN
Faith development opportunities related to connections and interactions with parishioners	2018/19	MAINTAIN
Ongoing joint initiatives	2018/19	MAINTAIN
School Masses, enhance and expand participation in Sunday Masses	2018/19	MAINTAIN
Enhance communication about Ministries (students and parents)	2018/19	MAINTAIN
Ongoing support for students attending morning Masses	2018/19	MAINTAIN
COMMUNITY		
Neighbourhood advocacy (e.g., safety, development issues)	2018/19	STRATEGIZE
Continue to partner with Westside Academy	2018/19	STRATEGIZE
Host PD activities, conferences (ties into PD, retention)	2018/19	STRATEGIZE

Area of Focus and Activity	Year	Suggested Approach
Inclusivity of playground as community resource	2018/19	MAINTAIN
Being a good neighbor	2018/19	MAINTAIN
Continue to have a visible presence in the community (e.g., extracurricular activities, Mass in the park, fundraising and awareness campaigns)	2018/19	MAINTAIN
Host events open to all schools (e.g., cross country meet)	2018/19	MAINTAIN

Conclusion

The vision committee is most grateful to all members of the IC faith community for helping complete this Vision Document. We are confident that our renewed vision for Immaculate Conceptions reflects the principles of Catholic education and will help clarify this mission. It is our sincere hope that the document will serve a useful and “living” resource over the next five years. To that end, it is important to stress that the activities and approaches listed in this document are recommendations that, while based on broad consultation and careful consideration, should still be subject to ongoing review and reconsideration. Those called to make decisions on behalf of the school are encouraged to consider these and other ideas for promoting Catholic education, as future conditions and opportunities warrant. Let us pray that the words expressed in our new School Philosophy and Vision statements offer guidance and support in the many deliberations and decisions ahead.