

SUMMARY AND CLOSURE

THE ORAL REPORT

Good afternoon, Mr. Balistrere, Father Hoffa , Mrs. Hannis-Miskar, and staff!

It was only Monday evening when we began this process, but it seems as if we've worked on this report a lot longer.

A special thanks to your principal, Mrs. Amy Hannis-Miskar for her leadership and Internal Coordinators Mrs. Mary Beth Klein, Mrs. Alice Miller, and Ms. Lauri Daukshus for their hard work in preparing your school for our visit, for organizing our visit, and for being so accommodating and responsive to our requests and needs.

I would also like to recognize all the time, effort and energy that each of you put into the self-study. Each one of you deserves a great deal of credit for this undertaking. My hope is that you have found it to be a truly worthwhile experience and benefited from this study. It is a difficult thing to find one's shortcomings but so easy to see one's good points. This study did both and will give you the opportunity for growth.

At this time, I would also like to express my personal thanks to the members of my team: Ms. Anne Perrone and Dr. Joseph Gallegos. I feel privileged to have worked with such a talented group of educators who are truly dedicated to our profession; they were awesome! Our work began as soon as we received both the self-study and strategic plan. We had to read and carefully analyze both your self-study and strategic plan. My team worked diligently while remaining focused even during this virtual visit. They were always ready with a smile and laughter to move the process along which helped keep us going. Their generous sharing of expertise and tireless energy during the team visit was outstanding.

The mission of the visiting team is to assist the school as it strives to achieve coherence and excellence. Again, remember why we had this virtual visit. We are not consultants. We did not arrive to tell you how to operate your school. We were here to look objectively at your school: to affirm all the good that you are already doing and to give you suggestions or recommendations of ways to make your school move forward. We also will make a recommendation to Middle States as to whether St. Jerome Regional School should be re-accredited.

This oral report is a brief summary of the major points that will likely be included in the written report, which will follow in approximately four to six weeks – most likely sooner.

After this visit, the team's report and recommendations are sent to the Middle States' offices. Then what happens?

First the Commission's Staff reviews your self-study along with our report to make a professional judgment as to whether the evidence supports the team's conclusions and recommendations.

Second, an Advisory Committee which meets in March and has a special knowledge of the protocol reviews the Peer Review Team's report and the Commission staff's analysis of that report after having read your self-study.

Third, the Membership and Accreditation Committee of the Commission reviews the Peer Review Team's report, the staff analysis, and the recommendations of the advisory committee.

Finally, the Commission takes an accreditation action based on its review of the recommendations made by the Visiting Team, the professional staff, the advisory committee and the Membership & Accreditation Committee of the Commission. The Commission then votes on accreditation in April for fall visitations. The meetings are April 15 & 16 this school year in Philadelphia.

When I first read your self-study and strategic plan, I was excited about all that your school has to offer. I was anxious to come and see it in operation. As a team, we came with expectations derived from your self-study, and I assure you we were not disappointed.

For the last three days and nights, we have met as a team to discuss all that we have read, observed virtually, interviewed, and learned about your school.

It is important that you know that accreditation is a voluntary activity. We are here because you invited us. You asked us to study the work that you are doing and your plans for the future. Therefore, we came here with several purposes.

First, we were charged with ensuring that St. Jerome Regional School meets the Middle States Standards for Accreditation.

In addition to meeting the standards, the protocol you chose—*Excellence by Design* - requires that you have a system of continuous planning for school improvement. It also requires that you develop objectives and subsequently goals for improving areas of student performance and that you create plans to achieve those goals. The expectation is that, after the team leaves, you will faithfully implement your improvement plan over the next seven years and make a good faith effort to achieve the goals you set.

In addition to being the evaluators, we also came as colleagues. We came to look and listen with discerning eyes and ears as professional friends. What we have to say to you is offered in the spirit of our desire to leave you in a better position to achieve your goals than before we had this virtual visitation.

At the conclusion of this virtual oral report, Middle States protocol requires that we not entertain any questions or enter into any discussion. You will have the opportunity to ask questions about our findings after you have received and reviewed the written report.

Let me begin the substance of this report by sharing with you what we have determined to be the strengths of your school.

- The administration, faculty, and staff have established a welcoming environment to teach Catholic values thus creating a culture of citizenship.

- The principal, Mrs. Hannis-Miskar, is highly visible to staff, students, and parents, and has a positive influence on the school.
- Weekly Mass is celebrated with one class in the Chapel and the rest of the student body via video; Eucharistic Ministers take Communion to the rest of the school community.
- St. Jerome Regional School is implementing STEM Project Based Learning modules where students choose a problem to research and model.
- The entire staff made the transition to off-site education rapidly once the school had to close for the COVID-19 pandemic.

When we came to your school, we assumed that you not only wanted to hear from us about the strengths of your school but about the areas in need of improvement and the challenges we see you must address, as well. Therefore, we also asked most of the groups with which we met to identify the areas of the school most in need of improvement and the challenges the school faces in achieving its mission.

Most of these areas and challenges will not come as surprises to you.

- That the Strategic Plan committee work within the established time frames to ensure a timely completion of the goals.
- A fenced-in play area be installed to secure the safety of the children while at recess or physical education.
- Build on your professional development plan that will add to teacher strengths in the use of your SMARTBoards, digital classrooms, and technology interactions with your students.
- With enrollment increasing, continue to pursue a long-range facilities plan which will provide for additional classrooms.
- A financial plan which includes a steadfast commitment from all parishes' subsidies that need to be implemented in any short and long term financial plan to maintain and secure the future of St. Jerome Regional School.

The second factor we must consider in making our accreditation recommendation is whether St. Jerome Regional School meets the requirements of the Excellence by Design protocol. These requirements are summarized in the following commitments you must make to be accredited:

- You must commit to plan strategically with a specific emphasis on improving student performance in the areas you identified to be priorities for your students.
- You must commit yourselves to establishing a culture of being accountable for your students' performance.
- You must be committed to involving a broad spectrum of your school's stakeholders in defining a vision for your school, in developing the means to get closer to that vision, and in designing and implementing action plans to achieve that vision. This is not to be an exercise for the education professionals only. It is expected that this will be a strategic plan literally owned by the entire school community and for which the entire community will be held accountable.

This Peer Review Team will recommend to the Middle States Commission on Elementary Schools that St. Jerome Regional School be Accredited for a period of seven years.

As we take our leave, the members of the Peer Review Team wish to thank all of you for opening your school to us, for your hospitality, and for sharing with us your hopes, dreams, and concerns. It has been a rich and rewarding experience.

VISITING TEAM ROSTER

Role	Name	School/Organization
Chair of the Team	Mr. John C. Coble	St. Francis Academy, Retired
Team Member	Dr. Joseph Gallegos	Orion High School, Founder
Team Member	Ms. Ann Perrone	Germantown Friends School, Retired