

REFLECTION AND EVALUATION – 2015

INTRODUCTION: At the end of the school year teachers were invited to reflect on the highlights of the 2014-2015 Academic Year from their own perspective and to identify areas for improvement. A similar evaluation and reflection has taken place for a number of years. This report is in 3 sections:

1. Section 1 indicates what teachers identified as the highlights of 2014-2015 Academic Year. Feedback has been prioritised in order of the number of times a point was made – e.g. (6) after a comment means that particular point was made 6 times.
2. Section 2 summarises the areas teachers identified for improvement going forward into 2015-2016.
3. Section 3 reflects on which of the areas identified for improvement in 2014-2015, have been addressed and how.

SECTION 1: HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SCHOOL YEAR 2014-2015:

- That our Mission Statement isn't just words on paper, but "a living reality", as we witnessed in the face of sad circumstances for many of our students during the year.
- Sports (6):
 - Cadette girls winning the basketball league for the first time (2)
 - Seeing sporting activities branching out into so many areas (eg kayaking)
 - Be Active Week (4) – "a great way to bond with students"
 - First Gaelic matches played on school pitch and our ladies' won!
 - Triathlon
 - The Campus Mile
- Endeavour Awards (6)
- Leaving Cert Graduation (5)
- School tours and trips(4)
 - School tour to Barcelona (2)
 - Trip to Ovoca (3)
 - 2nd year school tour was really enjoyable and was a lovely opportunity to see many students in another light!
 - Paintballing with 6th years
- Talent show (4)
- Involvement in Teaching and Learning Pedagogical Developments at a National Level
 - Mahara, particularly with first year students (3)
 - Instructional Leadership presentations to national/third level fora(2)
-
- Open Day (3)
- Science and Technology Day (3)
- Academic Awards (3)
- The support and kindness of staff (3)

- Seeing how so many 3rd year students have matured and progressed (2); “the hard work, good humour and enthusiasm of particularly students in C1 and C2”
- Improvement of current 2nd years’ behaviour – well done to the tutorial team (2)
- Staff Christmas party (2)
- Working with great teams of tutors (2)
- Spelling bee (2)
- Popularity of “Word of the Week” (2)
- The voluntary supervision of the library at lunchtime (2) – thanks Brenda
- Response to Christmas Hamper Appeal (2)
- “Darkness into Light” (2)
- Maths inspection report – which recognised excellence, hard work and enthusiasm of those involved (2)
- Art Exhibition (2) – especially the inclusion of some student work.
- Animation course, especially participation of students from G7, as it was the first time they have participated significantly in an extra-curricular activity. (2)
- The Tree Council of Ireland tree planting initiative saw 6th years engaging with nature and having fun.
- JCSP Christmas Party Day “a feel good” day
- Allowing some Croke Park “credit” for staff who volunteer for the 3 Saturday events – assessment, open day and science and technology day
- Runamuck
- “Great work is being done in our school by the management and middle management”

SECTION 2: IDENTIFYING AREAS FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT:

Teaching and Learning:

- Appointment of tutors : as we move forward other staff members need to be involved in the tutor system as perhaps it would make them more aware and considerate of the load carried by tutors - also a meeting at the start of the year especially for new tutors to go through procedure would be very useful. This is beginning to happen but needs to continue.
- Be Active Week (2)
 - while it is very positive to encourage physical activity the timing of “Be Active Week” for exam classes is poor. Could it be for last class of the day as students are “wired to the moon” for every afternoon that week. Too many students did not participate in activities but sat around the edges of the courts/ pitches.
 - Could we consider reverting back to having a sports day instead of "Be Active Week"? It is a critical time in the school year.
- Career guidance for third year students (2)

- as many have a very poor idea of what subject choices to make for fifth year and the implications of these choices. Advise students about the work load in certain subjects as some subjects take a lot of work for little reward in the points system - students should be aware of this unless they need a particular subject for a specific course.
- a few classes before the students make their subject choices for 5th year would be invaluable. Many students know little or nothing about the points system, college requirements or the varying workload involved in different subjects. They didn't really know what criteria to use when choosing their subjects.

Pastoral Care and Student Issues:

- Full support for the proposed ban on internet connected devices, except for academic purposes in a classroom/supervised setting, is the right thing for the well-being of the students
- The voting system for the Endeavour Awards needs to be reviewed. Not all teachers vote and this is unfair to class groups who may miss out on awards because of this. Could a Croke Park hour could be used for the voting - maybe even half an hour and then tutors and year heads could go through the votes together and make sure no deserving students miss out.

Student Discipline:

- A new discipline procedure so that there is a UNIFIED approach to correcting inappropriate student behaviour. (2) the following suggestions were made:
 - A way to deal with students on the corridors could be a hall pass type system. Each teacher could have a hall pass with his/her name on it so if a student needs to go to the toilet or locker they are given the hall pass. Obviously then students who do not have a hall pass do not have permission to be out of class and should not be in the corridors.
Another idea would be if there was a rule that no students are allowed go to the toilet or lockers during first class, the class just after break and class after lunch.
- Uniform – need to re-focus in particular on shoes and have a common approach; Uniform- could we refocus on this area in particular shoes and have a common approach. (5).

- Full support for the proposed ban on internet connected devices is the right thing for the well-being of the student and though it may not be an easy few weeks to begin with is worth fighting for. (4)
- A whole staff approach to use of lockers (2)
- While some effort was made this year to meet with students on their return from suspension, this needs to be continued, particularly when students have been suspended for a serious incident.
- Students being let out of some classes early and on a regular basis
- Students wandering around corridors between classes

Staff Wellbeing and Professional Development:

- Time allocation at the beginning of the school year to organise stock, equipment and classroom
- A more equitable share of difficult jobs and difficult class groups: ie JCSP/LCA classes shared out more evenly. Some people seem to have little understanding of these pupils.
- Ease the schedule of meetings

Administration:

- Extra supervision is needed outside G1/G2 at lunchtime
- A weekly time allocation for tutor/year head meetings – it's impossible to snatch time otherwise.

Building and Facilities:

- Art room computer facilities : We have been a little under pressure in the art room with the computers this year, especially with their inability to print. Though we got a great new printer, we unfortunately couldn't get it hooked up to the student PCs and oftentimes it didn't work for the teacher's PC either. This assess is really important for the development of students' independent researching skills, engagement levels and encouragement of art appreciation, it is something we will have to try to remedy early next year.

SECTION 3: A REVIEW OF WHICH PRIORITIES FROM 2013 – 2014 WERE ADDRESSED AND HOW

Below is a summary of progress made in areas identified for attention in May 2014. The report is coded as follows:

Green: Areas were significant/total progress was achieved.

Black: Areas where it is difficult to comment as the matter relates to whole staff matters or are matters of opinion.

Ref: Areas which are still to be acted upon.

Teaching and Learning:

- More subject planning meetings need to be scheduled - 5 hour allocation was assigned at the beginning of the year.
- Students need to use journals properly (3).
- International students and LC repeat students not from Athy College – effect on other students' learning is not always good. Placement in 5th year is a better option for international students.
- Motivation of senior cycle students. Suggestion: Connect in with "Managing Myself" key skill (School Improvement Plan). Monitor attendance of senior cycle students (2)– involve parents early where there are problems.
- Emphasise the importance of homework and the use of the journal with all classes.

Pastoral Care and Student Issues:

- More meetings of Pastoral Care teams need to take place (4).
- Significantly increase the number of nominations required to receive an Endeavour Award.
- A meeting needs to be held at the beginning of the academic year to explain the role of tutor, roll book etc to new teachers. Students are frequently being sent to tutors' rooms without phone call, note etc during class time. This is very unfair on the tutor and on the class whose tuition time is being interrupted (3).

Student Discipline:

- School bags at doorways and in corridors a problem. Suggestion: shutter in canteen not to go up for 5 minutes after the bell to give students time to go to lockers and stop rush for food.
- Students not bringing school bags home. Focus needed on students bringing all equipment to class. (3)
- Suggestion: Cameras in corridors and locker areas.
- Uniform – need to re-focus in particular on shoes and have a common approach (2).
- Suggestion: Return of weekly/fortnightly blitzes on particular focus points. Principal texting parents throughout the summer to remind about purchasing the proper school uniform.
- Some senior students stayed down town during class 7 activities organized for Be Active Week.
- Increase number of teachers on break duty (2).
- All teachers promote courtesy, respect and manners amongst students. Suggestion: Link in with “Managing Myself” (School Improvement Plan)

Staff Wellbeing and Professional Development:

- ePortal comments on student matters; do not use tutors’ break times to discuss student discipline matters. Every teacher deserves his/her break (3).
- More opportunities for collegial/staff bonding and team building. Suggestion: Ovoca Manor (3) – Claire organised our Christmas party away
- More staff to be trained in area of First Aid (2)

Administration:

- More meetings of in-school management team and staff meetings should take place.
- Would it be possibility to make allowance within Croke Park hours for voluntary Saturday mornings? The three Saturday mornings amount to about 12 hours for any teacher who participates in all 3. Would it be possible to sue some Croke Park hours for correcting mocks?
- Planning time for subjects early in the first term
- Issues around supervision of cleaning the canteen area.

Building and Facilities:

- Gravel channel at front door could be paved to prevent gravel entering the building.
- Improved sound system required for some events.
- More air-dryers in toilets to replace paper towel.