

Holy Savior Menard Central High School

Mr. Dale Skinner, Principal

Peer Review Team Report

SACS School Improvement Process

September 14-16, 2004



**Louisiana Secondary and Middle Schools Committee
Commission on Secondary and Middle Schools
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools**

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SACS Peer Review Team Assignments

Part 1	Executive Summary	Amy Terral Dianne Simms
Part 2	Performance and Progress Report	Not Applicable until 2009
Part 3	School Profile	Tammy Hubbard Mitzi Quinn
Part 4	Beliefs and Mission	Tammy Hubbard Mitzi Quinn
Part 5	Priorities for Improving Student Learning	Connie Britt Lori Wallace
Part 6	Priorities for Improving Student Performance	Amy Terral Dianne Simms
Part 7	Action Plan	Connie Britt Lori Wallace
Part 8	Accreditation Standards 2000	J. W. Cook, Jr.

Introduction

A Peer Review Team representing the Commission on Secondary and Middle Schools of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools made an on-site visit to Holy Savior Menard Central High School in Alexandria, Louisiana, on September 14-16, 2004. The peer review team on-site visit is a part of the SACS School Improvement Process and is required every five years for continuing accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

In conducting the on-site review, the Peer Review Team was responsible for the following:

1. Assessing the adequacy of the self-study process.
2. Identifying strengths of the school deserving of commendations.
3. Developing recommendations that may help to strengthen the school's programs and efforts towards continued school improvement.
4. Assessing compliance with the standards of the Commission on Secondary and Middle Schools.
5. Developing a written report of findings of particular strengths and suggestions for improvement.

In fulfillment of the team's responsibilities, members performed the following tasks:

1. Reviewed documentation provided by the school.
2. Toured campus and facilities.
3. Met with the various working committees established by the school to conduct specific aspects of the process.
4. Conducted interviews with all stakeholder groups.
5. Met in deliberation to discuss and reach consensus on the work of the school throughout the process.
6. Assessed and verified the school's compliance of Accreditation Standards 2000.
7. Developed a draft of commendations and recommendations.
8. Made a determination of the school's continuing accreditation status.
9. Contributed to the contents and focus of the written exit report.

Overview of School

Holy Savior Menard Central High School is located in Alexandria, but its students come from other parts of the central Louisiana area, predominantly Rapides Parish. The following statistics have been compiled from the 2000 census of both the city of Alexandria and Rapides Parish.

- The total population of Alexandria is approximately 46,342, with 43% white, 55% black, and 2% of other racial groups.
- The total population of Rapides Parish is approximately 126,566, with 66.5 % white, 30.4 % black, and 3 % of other racial groups.
- The median household income for the parish is \$29,856, with the per capita income at \$16,088. Approximately 20.5% of the population is below poverty level.
- Among adults age 25 or more, 74.6% have a high school diploma, and 16.5% have a bachelor's degree or higher.

- The percentage of students who live in a married-couple family is 65%, while 29% live in single parent homes.
- The employers in Rapides Parish allow for diverse economic opportunities. The largest are Rapides Regional Medical Center, Christus St. Frances Cabrini Hospital, Rapides Parish School Board, Pinecrest State School, Martin Lumber Company, Dresser Industries, and Central Louisiana Electric Company. The increasing income base and population of central Louisiana make it attractive to new and existing business expansion.
- The post-secondary educational opportunities in the area include Louisiana College, Louisiana State University at Alexandria, Northwestern State University, and Louisiana Technical College.
- Community organizations make available many cultural opportunities throughout the area. These include Kent House, Alexandria Museum of Art, Rapides Symphony Orchestra, Arna Bontemps Museum, local parish library branches, ballet and dance troupes, as well as college and community theater groups.
- A number of civic organizations and service agencies serve the needs of the area, including United Way, Boys and Girls Club, YMCA, rotary club, and the local chamber of commerce.

Holy Savior Menard's roots go back to 1884, when Father L. Menard became the 11th pastor of St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church. On October 10, 1892, the works and prayers of Father Menard became a reality with the construction of the first school for boys in Alexandria. It was located on Second and Ogden Streets and was named the St. Francis Xavier Commercial College. In 1903, the school was rebuilt on the corner of Fourth and Beauregard Streets, next to the present St. Francis Xavier Cathedral. In 1915, the school was raised 10 feet to provide a 3rd floor and additional floor space to handle the increased enrollment.

Father Menard was also responsible for bringing the Sisters of Divine Providence and the Brothers of the Sacred Heart to Alexandria. The sisters taught at the St. Francis Xavier Girls Academy, founded in 1894, and later at Providence Academy, Providence Central, and currently at Our Lady of Prompt Succor Elementary School. The brothers taught at the Commercial College and later at Menard Memorial High School.

In June 1922, the Elliott Street property between 19th and 20th Streets was acquired, and after 31 years, the St. Francis Xavier Commercial College ceased to exist, being renamed Menard Memorial, after Father Menard. Menard Memorial operated at the Elliott Street location as a school for boys until 1966.

In 1914, St. Francis Xavier, which became Providence Academy for Girls, opened on the grounds of the present Our Lady of Prompt Succor Church. In 1949, Providence Academy became Providence Central for Girls in grades 9-12, and Our Lady of Prompt Succor for boys and girls in kindergarten through 8th grade.

In 1934, the Menard Memorial school colors were changed from purple and gold to green, gold, and white, and the mascot was changed from the bulldogs to the eagles.

The year 1966 marked the last year for the name "Menard Memorial." In that year, the school combined with Providence Central to become Holy Savior Menard Central High School. The new facilities at its present location on Coliseum Boulevard opened in the fall of 1967

In 1988, in cooperation with Our Lady of Prompt Succor, the 7th and 8th grades were moved from Prompt Succor to Menard, which is the current format of the school.

Menard is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (since 1985) and by the Louisiana State Department of Education. The school is affiliated with the National Catholic Educational Association, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Athletic teams participate under the auspices of the Louisiana High School Athletic Association.

Menard is intensely proud of its 5,000 plus alumni. One of the school's greatest assets is the outstanding achievement of its graduates. Many prominent leaders in the central Louisiana area were among students nurtured through their crucial adolescent years by the Brothers of the Sacred Heart and dedicated lay faculty and staff members of Menard.

Holy Savior Menard's campus includes six buildings, four athletic facilities, a grassy commons area, and three parking lots. The buildings include the main building, chapel, gymnasium, activities building, field house, weight training building, and a permanent concession stand in the football stadium. In the main building are 34 classrooms, a dedicated media room, library, teachers' lounge, meeting room, administration and counselor offices, cafeteria, and an enclosed mall. Athletic facilities are a football stadium, baseball field, softball field, and four-court tennis court.

The Holy Savior Menard Central High School faculty and staff consists of one Principal, one President, one Dean of Students, one Assistant Principal for Curriculum/Technology Coordinator, one Academic Support Program Coordinator/Junior High Coordinator, one Business Manager/Director of Development, one full-time guidance counselor and one part-time guidance counselor, one librarian, thirty-five regular education teachers, one administrative assistant/guidance secretary, one secretary/receptionist, one bookkeeper, two custodians, and five food service workers.

In 2004 Holy Savior Menard was the Quiz Bowl Division 3 State Runner-up. Menard has consistently performed well in the Literary Rally at the district Rally and has had at least three top-five finishers at the State Rally. In 2003, Menard won the District Rally and had six top-five finishers at the State Rally.

Within the past five years, enrollment of Holy Savior Menard Central High School, grades 7 through 12, has increased from 451 to 591. There have been slight changes in the student population:

- The percentage of black students has increased from 2% to 3%, while the percentage of students of other races has increased from .6% to 1%. The number of students who receive free or reduced lunch has increased from 5.99% to 6.26%.
- Holy Savior Menard offers financial assistance to needy Catholic families and minorities, which adds to the economic diversity of the school.
- The number of non-Catholic students enrolled has increased from 15% to 23% in the last five years.

Evaluation of the School's Planning Phase

Holy Savior Menard Central High School initiated the planning phase of the SACS School Improvement Process in the fall of 2003. In the planning phase, the *National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE) School Improvement: Focusing on Student Performance* was used as the primary planning tool for school and community representatives to conduct the self-study. As such, school personnel, parents, students, and other community representatives worked collaboratively to address the eight components of the self-study:

1. An executive summary that provides an overview of the school's most recent improvement efforts and highlights the significant challenges facing the school.
2. A performance and progress report which provides a description of the specific activities or practices implemented during the past five years and results of such efforts. (Not applicable until 2009)
3. A school profile that provides a comprehensive description of student performance data, student and community demographics, school characteristics, and the stakeholders' beliefs regarding the quality of the institution
4. Beliefs and mission statement that provide a guide for current and future efforts of the school, which reflects a commitment to student success. The beliefs and mission are evident in the instructional and organizational practices of the school.
5. Priorities for Improving Student Learning, which provides a set of clear and concise goals, includes a description of the current levels of student performance for each priority and means by which the school will evaluate student progress in pursuit of the goal.
6. Priorities for Improving School Performance, which provides an analysis of data regarding the operation of the school, the use and allocation of resources, support for instruction and student learning, curriculum, instructional practices, and assessment.
7. An action plan that provides the process for determining target goals, a design of data-driven school-improvement initiatives to achieve the goals, an estimation of timeline and resources needed to implement the strategies, and identification of those responsible for implementing the plan.
8. The Standards for Accreditation, which is a report of the school's compliance with SACS Accreditation Standards 2000.

A leadership team comprised of eight staff members, including the principal, facilitated and coordinated the activities associated with the self-study. The Peer Review Team is pleased to note that the school provided an opportunity for all stakeholders to contribute to the process and deliberations throughout the planning phase. It is the belief of the Peer Review Team that school personnel, with community support, faithfully implemented the SACS School Improvement Process and, as such, has made the commitment to improving student learning and the work of the school.

Part 1: Executive Summary

The summary outlines the improvements and challenges that have been addressed during the last five years. A capital campaign was held that raised money to fund the replacement of the school's roof, install an elevator to meet state handicap standards, and renovate the student and faculty parking lots. Additional funds were raised to fund a computer lab, the construction of a girls' softball field, renovation of the boys weight room, and the purchase of a digital camcorder to help create a broadcasting class. A further need for funding for technology and for academic programs was expressed. The Peer Review Team, through interviews and information from the self-study, verified these findings that are the basis for the commendations and recommendations listed below.

Commendations:

1. Communication between school administration and parents is exemplary.
2. The addition of Journalism II and the creation of the Drama Department provide an avenue for self-expression, as well as academic growth.
3. The academic achievement of students on a district, state, and national level demonstrates the level of commitment and dedication of the faculty.

Recommendations:

1. Continue to develop and implement curriculum changes that are in line with the *Louisiana Content Standards Foundation Skills*.
2. Investigate opportunities to expand technological, academic, and library resources.

Part 2: Performance and Progress Report

Not applicable until 2009.

Part 3: School Profile

This component provides a comprehensive description of student performance data, demographics, school characteristics, and stakeholders' perspective of education. The Peer Review Team examined the self-study and conducted stakeholder interviews which served as the basis for the following commendations and recommendations.

Commendations:

1. The history of the school and its place in the Catholic community provides a strong sense of school pride.
2. Parents and students express genuine confidence in the faculty's expertise and commitment to ensure continued student success in the classroom.
3. Parents and students indicate that a safe environment enhances student learning.
4. Parents and students indicate an ease of accessibility and cooperation of teachers and administrators.
5. The addition of the ACT prep course has raised students' ACT scores.

Recommendations:

1. Update the School Profile annually to reflect the most current data describing the characteristics of the students, school, and communities served. (SACS Standard 1.1)
2. Adopt a plan to track post-graduate students.
3. Offer an advisory program providing each student with an adult advisor. (SACS Standard 4.3)
4. Maintain records of non-certified teachers' progress toward certification. (SACS Standard 3.5)

Part 4: Beliefs and Missions

After seeking input from all stakeholder groups and analyzing the *NSSE School Beliefs Inventory*, the Beliefs and Mission committee revised the former Beliefs and Mission Statement. The Peer Review Team used interviews and information compiled in the self-study as the foundation for the commendations and recommendations.

Commendations:

1. The Mission Statement is displayed throughout the school.
2. The Beliefs and Mission Statement reflects the stakeholders' purpose, focus, and direction for the school.

Recommendations:

1. Review the Beliefs and Mission Statement annually, revise as needed, and disseminate to all stakeholders using a variety of media. (SACS Standard 1.4)
2. Ensure that all stakeholders (i.e., faculty, students, parents, and community members) are involved in the annual review and approval of the Beliefs and Mission Statement.
3. Display Mission Statement on the web site and all other publications.

Part 5: Priorities for Improving Student Learning

After reviewing the School Profile and Beliefs and Mission Statement, the Committee for Improving Student Learning collaborated with administrators, staff, colleagues, and community stakeholders to develop a unified idea of the direction in which students should progress. Data from the state standards, diocesan standards, parish standards, school standards, and the results of the *NSSE Survey of Goals for Student Learning* were analyzed. Thinking and Reasoning Skills and Personal and Social Responsibility were chosen as high priorities for improvement. The Peer Review Team verified the findings of the Committee for Improving Student Learning through interviews, as well as through the information found in the self-study, and used both as the bases for commendations and recommendations.

Commendations:

1. A concerned administration and staff provide a caring, safe, and well-disciplined environment that encourages student learning.
2. The school community encourages and provides opportunities for students to develop their personal and social responsibilities through many clubs and organizations.
3. The administration, faculty, parents, and students have high expectations for academic achievement.
4. The academic program provides a challenging curriculum with a variety of learning opportunities.

Recommendations:

1. Increase the various uses of technology as learning tools for the entire student body.
2. Encourage instructional strategies and evaluation techniques that require and promote research skills, analysis of data, application of prior knowledge, and other higher order thinking skills.
3. Continue to adjust curriculum and provide staff development to accommodate and facilitate priorities for improving student learning.

Part 6: Priorities for Improving School Performance

The Committee for Improving School Performance used the *NSSE Survey of Instructional and Organizational Effectiveness* to determine the school's strengths and weaknesses. Those participating in the survey process included faculty and staff, giving the instructional and organizational evaluation validity and substance. The Peer Review Team, through interviews and information from the self-study, verified these findings that are the basis for the commendations and recommendations listed below.

Commendations:

1. The students are provided with assistance in learning beyond classroom instruction.
2. Parents and students are given many opportunities for active involvement.
3. The school administration and faculty place high value on discipline and safety.

Recommendations:

1. Continue to update annually the documentation of professional growth credit for each staff member and place on file in the principal's office. (SACS Standard 3.9)
2. Create a school improvement team that includes faculty, staff, parents, and representatives from other stakeholder groups. (SACS Standard 2.7)
3. Provide time and resources for professional development activities for all personnel. (SACS Standard 3.14)
4. Assist teachers in implementing curriculum and facilitating learning by providing access to professional development programs. (SACS Standard 5.10)

Part 7: Action Plan

The Action Plan Committee, working with the faculty and staff and using the *NSSE Indicators of Quality Instructional Systems*, determined that the highest priorities for improvement with low student achievement lie in the areas of Thinking and Reasoning Skills and Personal and Social Skills. Objectives for each goal were reviewed in light of the school's profile, beliefs and mission, vision, and analysis of instructional and organizational effectiveness in order to ensure applicability, consistency, and relevancy. The Peer Review Team verified this information through interviews and information found in the self-study and used both as the bases for the commendations and recommendations listed below.

Commendations:

1. The faculty demonstrates admirable eagerness and willingness to grow as educators.
2. Several action steps focus on achieving the desired goal of the use of higher order thinking skills by the students.

Recommendations:

1. Provide meaningful, teacher-driven professional development that will facilitate the improvement of students' skills in thinking and reasoning.
2. Consider implementing alternative means of evaluating student achievement.
3. Monitor the effectiveness of the goals in the plan by the school leadership team on an ongoing basis.

Part 8: Accreditations Standards 2000

Holy Savior Menard Central High School is in compliance with all these standards.

Summary and Conclusion

The Peer Review Team found Holy Savior Menard Central High School to be an excellent school with a dedicated administration, faculty, and staff who hold instructional improvement as a high priority. Additionally, a supportive group of parents and community representatives gave excellent suggestions that will support school improvement initiatives.

The School Improvement Plan developed collaboratively by the school and community has identified appropriate and worthwhile goals for improving student performance. School personnel should carefully monitor the impact that strategies designed to improve student learning have on the desired area of improvement. Additionally, school personnel should immediately begin to expand the sources of data and implement appropriate assessment instruments to monitor student progress in achieving the expectations for student learning. It is the belief of the Peer Review Team that the school and community representatives are eager to pursue the goals and strategies outlined in the School Improvement Plan.

With the primary focus of this process being the improvement of student performance, the Peer Review Team sincerely hopes that the recommendations presented in this report will help in the continuing efforts to improve the quality of the learning experience provided students. In order for a school to improve, it must continually assess, plan, implement, monitor, evaluate, and reassess. The success of such a process is largely dependent on the school's understanding and level of commitment to the process of school improvement planning and implementation.

The Peer Review Team recommends that the school and community immediately begin the implementation phase as described in the *SACS School Improvement Process* handbook and in part six of the NSSE School Improvement: Focusing on Student Performance. It is through the implementation phase that the instructional and organizational capacity of the school can be strengthened and students' achievement of the desired results for learning will be accomplished. Throughout the implementation phase the school should ensure that the following steps are taken:

1. Implement the school improvement plan, focusing on specific goals for student learning.
2. Implement identified strategies to pursue goals for student learning.
3. Update and communicate the school profile annually.
4. Document growth in student learning, as well as instructional and organizational effectiveness.
5. Review and revise the improvement plan annually.

The Peer Review Team expresses appreciation to the administration, faculty, staff, students, parents, and the community of Holy Savior Menard Central High School for the hospitality extended throughout the visit. Additionally, the team wishes the school and its students much success in pursuit of student achievement and school improvement.

The Peer Review Team certifies that the school has satisfactorily met the expectations and responsibilities involved in the SACS School Improvement Process. Additionally, the Peer Review Team certifies that Holy Savior Menard Central High School meets all the standards required for accreditation. The Peer Review Team recommends to the Louisiana State SACS Committee that Holy Savior Menard Central High School continue its accreditation by the Commission on Secondary and Middle Schools of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.