



Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North America

A Province of the Congregation of Christian Brothers

BR. RICE HIGH SCHOOL – BLOOMFIELD HILLS, MI **ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS EVALUATION VISIT REPORT**

Visit Date: November 5 – 7, 2013

Report Date: November 19, 2013

VISITING TEAM

Ona Bessette, CND, Chair	Office of Educational Services
Aaron Mitchell	St. Thomas More Collegiate
David Olinger	O'Dea High School
Robert Viarengo	Palma School

VISIT PROCESS

The Visiting Team received and reviewed electronic copies of the Self-Study Document prepared by the Steering Committee prior to the beginning of the visit to Br. Rice High School. Focus questions were prepared based on the material in the Self-Study and used by team members during their sessions.

The Team was greeted by Mr. John Birney (President), Br. Michael Segvich, CFC (Principal) and Sr. M. Elena Sabalausky (Steering Committee Chair). Following a meeting to organize the visit, the team toured the school, led by students who answered questions about their impressions of the school and their involvement in the life of the school. The team then met separately with the Administrative Team, members of the Board of Directors and the Steering Committee to discuss the Self-Study Process, the current position of the school and the hoped for outcomes of the visit to Br. Rice HS.

During the three days at the school, the Visiting Team, divided into two smaller groups, and met with focus groups, including eight faculty groups, five staff groups, six student groups, and one parent group. In total, the team met with fifty-seven (57) students and one hundred and six (106) adults.

As soon as the members of the Visiting Team walked into the building, they easily recognized the school as an Edmund Rice Christian Brother School. As educators in the Edmund Rice Network, the team members felt immediately at home. They were very impressed with the Four Pillars of the school: Respect – Integrity – Character – Excellence! These elements speak strongly of the commitment to live and work in the tradition of Edmund Rice. Through these virtues the whole school community strives to walk in the footsteps of Edmund Rice. One student aptly stated, "Edmund Rice is a real person for us. He connects us to Jesus."

On Thursday afternoon, the Visiting Team met with Mr. Birney and Br. Segvich to share observations, commendations and suggestions for further growth of the school. At the conclusion of the visit, the



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Visiting Team thanked the school community for their warm welcome and hard work in living the ***Essential Elements of an Edmund Rice Christian Brother Education***. They presented an Oral Report which highlighted areas of commendation and recommendations to strengthen the Growth Plan and the deepening of the ***Essential Elements*** in the life of the school.

NOTES OF GRATITUDE

The Visiting Team is grateful for the warm welcome to the Br. Rice Family expressed by everyone – from the moment we entered the building and throughout our visit hospitality was the hallmark of our days. We were welcomed and brought into the Br. Rice Family. Mrs. Deb Greaney took care of our every need and provided wonderful meals – we left deeply satisfied and a few pounds heavier!

We were deeply impressed by the spirit of faith and commitment to living the ***Essential Elements*** and the centrality of Blessed Edmund Rice in the life of the school. It takes the work of each member of the Br. Rice community to build a school that models the ideals of Blessed Edmund. This is a school of which Edmund Rice would be proud.

We express deep gratitude to the Steering Committee for its hard work, dedication and willingness to shepherd the process of the self-study. We appreciate the participation of the entire professional community in numerous meetings and conversations over the course of more than two years to deepen the living of the ***Essential Elements*** at Br. Rice. The self-study process was very comprehensive and engaged all members of the school community. The Team was impressed that the voices of many were heard: faculty – staff – students – parents. It is our hope that the experience was an opportunity to celebrate and be renewed in the ministry of Catholic education in the spirit of Blessed Edmund Rice.

COMMENDATIONS

The following commendations are offered to highlight the strengths of Br. Rice High School and to encourage the school community to continue to grow in their living of the ***Essential Elements of an Edmund Rice Christian Brother Education***.

Pastoral Care

Br. Rice celebrates the value and dignity of its students, faculty, alumni and staff. The school is a place where students come first; pastoral care is clearly manifested in the Band of Brothers, mentoring groups, and proactive Counseling Department. The students are known as individuals, and it is hard for any student to fall through the cracks. This “Brotherhood” ensures students that there is always someone who is looking out for them.

Parents have peace of mind; they find the school to be a safe place and know that their sons are cared for and supported. The school community values the presence of the Christian Brothers, the Sisters, and Fr. Yost.

Mission

The responsibility of executing the mission of Br. Rice is clearly shared by the faculty, staff and students. All stakeholders are aware of the **Essential Elements**, which are evident throughout the building. Education in the **Essential Elements** is a key component of orientation for new members to the school. Coaches who do not work regularly in the building are in tune with the mission and culture of Br. Rice.

Academics

Br. Rice's academic programs hold students to high expectations. Teachers, in collaboration with technology directors, are excelling at integrating technology into the curriculum. Br. Rice's strong academic program supports student success in many areas, producing seven National Merit Scholars in the past year. Students are challenged to meet these high expectations for excellence according to their abilities and needs, and are offered avenues to achieve.

The Br. Rice Community is working diligently to celebrate its academic success. Everyone is aware that that is more than an athletics-achieving school. The school educates the whole person: mind, body, and spirit. The Growth Plans developed reflect a genuine effort to promote and enhance the identity of the school and further celebrate all the successful programs at Br. Rice.

Cultural

Br. Rice's Warrior culture is strong. Students entering Rice become part of a strong brotherhood with a sense of history and a strong Catholic identity. They are motivated and inspired by a dedicated faculty and staff. Prayer life is central to the daily experience of a Br. Rice student. Br. Rice graduates students who become good Catholic men who are leaders in the community.

Aspects of the culture that Br. Rice celebrates:

- A well maintained campus;
- A dedicated and welcoming staff: new teaches are mentored into the life of the school;
- Prayer that wraps the day: morning prayer, prayer before games, and Friday morning mass;
- The highly valued Band of Brothers Program;
- A Public Relations Office that is getting the good word out about the school, including a Twitter feed that gathers a strong supporter group with its 1,347 followers.

Service

Br. Rice has a dedicated Christian Service program and organizes various service events throughout the year. These yearly events include immersion programs in Peru and Kentucky. Students spoke particularly about the *Christ Child Program* and *Cleaning Up the D*. Living the **Essential Elements** that calls for standing in solidarity with those marginalized by poverty and injustice is a key motivator for the community of Br. Rice High School.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It was evident to the Visiting Team that the three aspects of the Growth Plan flowed from a careful examination of the *Essential Elements* as they are lived at the school. The following recommendations are offered to assist Br. Rice to live the *Essential Elements* more effectively and to further develop their Growth Plan.

1. Some aspects of the Growth Plan, particularly timelines and person/groups responsible, lack specificity. The Visiting Team recommends the following:
 - The formation of an Implementation Committee to oversee progress toward achievement of the three growth areas.
 - The revision of timelines to include more concrete dates with more precise designation of those responsible for completion.
2. Several stakeholders expressed disappointment that timelines had been set for facility improvements, especially the new science wing, but then not realized. The Visiting Team recommends that the administration, in close collaboration with the Board of Directors, set timelines for improvements only after a significant level of funding has been raised.
3. The Band of Brothers has been affirmed in the Visiting Team's conversation with stakeholder groups as an area for growth. Students, faculty, and administrators desire to see the program develop more into a true leadership and mentoring program focused on cultivating school spirit and on furthering Christian service and outreach. Based on conversations with stakeholders, the visiting team recommends the following considerations regarding the Band of Brothers:
 - Develop greater specificity and detail in timelines in the Growth Plan.
 - Fashion a clearer statement of purpose for the program and communicate it to all. Envision the end product – what would the school community hope for from an expansion of the Band of Brothers?
 - Provide more time and a designated space for Band Deans to meet and plan. Investment of time and resources will allow the program to mature and develop effectively.
 - Provide more time, space, and resources to develop and train mentor teachers and Band Captains.
 - Develop ways to increase the celebration of Band achievements, e.g. a school-wide assembly for presentation of cup at the end of the year.
 - Increase student support by having Band Deans and mentor teachers alert the counseling department of any concerns.

NEXT STEPS

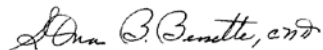
1. Work as a school community on the Growth Plan to re-organize and re-focus the Band of Brothers as indicated in the recommendations. Since the Band of Brothers involves most of the school community, take advantage of the wisdom and energy of everyone to move this project forward.
 - The Growth Plan to actively promote the image and viability of Br. Rice High School needs to be further developed by the Administration, Advancement Office, Alumni Office, and Admission Office.
 - The Growth Plan to prioritize and publish a plan for the improvements of the facilities requires the leadership of the Administration and Board of Directors. Consultation with the school community will insure ownership and support of the plan.
2. Send the revised Growth Plan for Band of Brothers to OES by the end of the first semester.

Upon receipt of the Growth Plan for the Band of Brothers with great specificity and details, the Office of Educational Services will recommend the Province Leadership Team to affirm that Br. Rice High School continues to live in the spirit of Blessed Edmund Rice and the ***Essential Elements of an Edmund Rice Christian Brother Education***.

FINAL THANKS

The members of the Visiting Team wishes to express our gratitude to the entire Br. Rice Community for the thoughtful and prayerful work done in preparation for the ***Essential Elements*** Visit. We were impressed with the many evidences of a vibrant, faith-filled community that shines a light of hope for all to see. It is a privilege and blessing to be united with Br. Rice High School in the Blessed Edmund Rice Family.

Respectfully submitted,



Sr. Ona B. Bessette, CND
Visiting Team Chair