



ACCREDITATION MANUAL CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOLS OF THE SEATTLE ARCHDIOCESE

“From the first moment that a student sets foot in a Catholic school, he or she ought to have the impression of entering a new environment, one illuminated by the light of faith and having its own unique characteristics. The Council summed this up by speaking of an environment permeated with the Gospel spirit of love and freedom.” (*The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*, Congregation for Catholic Education, Rome, 1988.)

Introduction

The Office of Catholic Faith Formation and the Catholic Schools Department of the Archdiocese of Seattle are involved in a process of assessing and strengthening the religious dimension of Catholic Secondary Schools in the Archdiocese of Seattle. Primary to this process is a self-study and subsequent site visit in conjunction with a school’s regularly scheduled accreditation/sponsorship cycle. The following self-study process is designed to guide this process and provide evidence of the Catholic Identity of the school.

Process

Each secondary school should incorporate the following self-study in their accreditation or sponsorship process or use the protocol developed by the Western Catholic Educational Association. One year prior to an accreditation visit, the principal should contact the Catholic Schools Department and the Office of Catholic Faith Formation to indicate the approximate timeline for the accreditation self-study and subsequent visit. In addition, the principal should contact the accrediting/sponsoring entity and receive approval for the incorporation of this component on Catholic Identity in the accreditation process.

The Office of Catholic Faith Formation will designate an individual to serve on the visiting team. This representative should receive a full self-study report that examines all aspects of the school as well as a complete collection of school publications and supporting materials. The representative identified by the Office of Catholic Faith Formation will serve as a full member of

the visiting team and will be responsible for ensuring that the final report includes commendations and recommendations relative to Catholic Identity.

Writing the Self-Study

This document contains standards and best practices pertaining to Catholic Identity. The school should reflect on the standards and best practices, and respond to all of the questions included. This process should be inclusive and, in some capacity, encompass all those responsible for carrying out the mission of the school, including faculty/staff, administration, school commission, board or trustees, and parents. Answers to the questions should reflect what the school is currently doing, rather than what it plans to do in the future. If the questions do not adequately cover an important aspect of the Catholic Identity of the school, the school should feel free to add the information necessary to describe this aspect to the visiting team. **However, it is important that no questions be deleted.**

Self-Study Standards, Best Practices, Questions

Catholic Identity Criterion

The school is Catholic, approved by the Local Ordinary (Canon 803), providing authentic Catholic teaching, opportunities for community worship and participation in the Sacraments, and promoting evangelization and service to the community.

MISSION AND PHILOSOPHY

“Catholic schools are called to a renewal of purpose, and some reorganization. The goals appropriate to today’s Catholic educational effort ... (include) the need to prepare young men and women to be witnesses to faith during an era of instability and at the same time to act as agents of creative institutional change for which adequate models hardly exist. While the Christian purpose of the Catholic school must always be clearly evident, no one form is prescribed for it.” (*To Teach as Jesus Did*, NCCB, 1972, #123)

“Our young people are the Church of today and tomorrow. It is imperative that we provide them with schools ready to address their spiritual, moral, and academic needs.” (*Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary & Secondary Schools in the Third Millennium*, USCCB, 2005, p. 8)

Standard #1

The school has a mission statement and philosophy statement which indicate the integration of the Roman Catholic Faith into all aspects of school life.

Best Practices

- The school has a mission statement and philosophy statement that clearly reflects a commitment to Catholic identity and to the beliefs of the Catholic Church.
- The school's mission and philosophy connects students to the greater Church community.
- The mission and philosophy are included in relevant school documents such as handbooks, websites, etc.
- The mission and philosophy are communicated and modeled by all constituents.
- The mission statement and philosophy are used as a standard in decision making.

Self-Study

- Include the school's mission statement and philosophy in the beginning of the self-study.
- How are the various constituents of the school educated to the mission and the philosophy of the school?
- Describe how the school's mission and philosophy are used in all areas of decision making.
- Provide a concrete example of how the mission informed a decision (e.g. administrative policy, academic policy, student life policy, or classroom activities).
- Describe the process of ongoing review of the mission statement and philosophy of the school.

PRAYER AND SACRAMENTS

"Within such (school) communities teachers and pupils experience together what it means to live a life of prayer, personal responsibility and freedom reflective of Gospel values." (*To Teach as Jesus Did*, #107)

"In the New Covenant, prayer is the living relationship of the children of God with their Father who is good beyond measure, with his Son Jesus Christ and with the Holy Spirit." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, United States Catholic Conference, 1994, #2565)

"Just as Baptism is the source of responsibilities and duties, the baptized person also enjoys rights within the Church: to receive the sacraments, to be nourished with the Word of God and

to be sustained by the other spiritual helps of the Church.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, United States Catholic Conference, 1994, #1269)

Standard #2

The school provides regular opportunities for the school community to experience prayer and the Sacraments.

Best Practices

- The liturgical seasons of the Church are integrated into the life of the school.
- Eucharistic liturgy is given high priority and adheres to archdiocesan norms.
- Students are encouraged to actively participate in liturgies and prayer services.
- Formal and informal worship experiences are designed for the age, understanding, and culture of the students.
- There are daily opportunities for prayer in the classroom.
- Various prayer forms are taught and creatively utilized, including personal prayer, and shared prayer with others.
- Students, staff/faculty, parents, school commissions and/or school boards, and alumni begin their meetings with prayer.
- The school provides retreat opportunities for their students, faculty/staff, and school boards or commissions.
- Students, staff/faculty, parents, school boards, and alumni are involved in the planning of their prayer opportunities and retreats.
- Teachers encourage their students to participate in their parish Confirmation programs.
- The school promotes the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation as a capstone to students’ conscience formation as a tool for understanding one’s personal and social responsibility for moral decisions.

Self-Study

- Describe the opportunities for prayer among students, faculty/staff, and parents, Boards/Commissions, Board committees, alumni, and others.
- Describe how your campus ministry program supports retreat, liturgy, sacraments and prayer opportunities.
- Describe how your campus ministry program is staffed and organized.
- Explain how students are involved in the campus ministry program as leaders and participants.
- How are the liturgical seasons of the Church integrated into the faith formation program?
- List student opportunities for worship.

- List Sacraments offered at your school.
- Describe opportunities for students to participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- Provide evidence of a prayer service, a retreat outline, and an order of worship of a recent school Mass or other liturgical celebration that are both student and adult led.

CURRICULUM

“The Catholic school finds its true justification in the mission of the Church; it is based on an educational philosophy in which faith, culture and life are brought into harmony. Through it, the local Church evangelizes, educates, and contributes to the formation of a healthy and morally sound lifestyle among its members...Above all, according to the Holy Father, the Catholic school helps in achieving a double objective: ‘of its nature it guides men and women to human and Christian perfection, and at the same time helps them to become mature in their faith. For those who believe in Christ, these are two facets of a single reality.’” (*The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*, The Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988, #34, quoting *Insegnamenti*, VIII/1, pp. 618 f.)

“As we, the Catholic bishops of the United States, and the entire Catholic community continue our journey through the twenty-first century, it remains our duty to model the Person of Jesus Christ, to teach the Gospel, and to evangelize our culture.” (*Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary & Secondary Schools in the Third Millennium*, USCCB, 2005, p14)

“But (the Catholic school’s) proper function is to create for the school community a special atmosphere animated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity, to help youth grow according to the new creatures they were made through Baptism as they develop their own personalities, and finally to order the whole of human culture to the news of salvation so that the knowledge the students gradually acquire of the world, life and man is illumined by faith. (*Gravissimum Educationis*, Pope Paul VI, 1965 #8)

Standard #3

The school has a Religion curriculum and instruction that is faithful to Roman Catholic Church teachings and meets the requirements set forth by the USCCB.

Best Practices

- The doctrinal framework set forth by the USCCB informs the design and implementation of the religion curriculum.
- Scripture is integrated throughout the religion curriculum.

- Inservice opportunities are provided by the school to update faculty and staff regarding Church teachings.
- The school schedule provides time for religion classes that is equal to other subject areas.
- Primary religion textbooks are in conformity with USCCB guidelines. In the event that a school wishes to use materials not on the list of approved textbooks, the school consults with the Archdiocesan Office of Catholic Faith Formation.
- Church documents are used as references and foundations for the social justice teachings of the Church.
- Attempts are made to relate religious instruction to the everyday experiences of students.

Self-Study

- Include a scope and sequence or curriculum guide for all courses offered in the religion program. A list of textbooks, supporting documents, and other religion curriculum materials should be included in the scope and sequence or curriculum guide.

THEOLOGY DEGREE/CATECHIST CERTIFICATION

“The church has always considered catechesis one of her primary tasks for before Christ ascended to his father after His resurrection, He gave the apostles a final command—to make disciples of all nations and to teach them to observe all that He had commanded. He thus entrusted them with the mission and the power to proclaim to humanity what they had heard, what they had seen with their eyes, what they had looked upon and touched with their hands, concerning the Word of Life. He also entrusted them with the mission and the power to explain with authority what He had taught them, His words and actions, His signs and commandments. And He gave them the spirit to fulfill this mission.” (*Catechesi Tradendae*, #1)

“The preparation and ongoing formation of new administrators and teachers is vital if our schools are to remain truly Catholic in all aspects of school life. Catholic school personnel should be grounded in a faith-based Catholic culture, have strong bonds to Christ and the Church, and be witnesses to the faith in both their words and actions. The formation of personnel will allow the Gospel message and the living presence of Jesus to permeate the entire life of the school community and thus be faithful to the school’s evangelizing mission.” (*Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary & Secondary Schools in the Third Millennium*, USCCB, 2005, pp. 9-10)

“Teachers realize that their first responsibility is to be attentive to their own relationship with Jesus Christ. Every catechist must constantly endeavor to transmit by his teaching and behavior

the teaching and life of Jesus.” (*Evangelization in the Catholic School*, Archdiocese of Baltimore, p. 6)

“But let teachers recognize that the Catholic school depends upon them almost entirely for the accomplishment of its goals and programs. They should therefore be very carefully prepared so that both in secular and religious knowledge they are equipped with suitable qualifications and also with a pedagogical skill that is in keeping with the findings of the contemporary world.” (*Gravissimum Educationis*, Pope Paul VI, 1965 #8)

Standard #4

The Local Ordinary approves those who teach the Catholic Faith (Canon 805), and their ongoing formation for catechetical and instructional competence. (*Policy review, consultation, revision, and implementation will be forthcoming by July 2011.*)

Best Practices

- The school’s teachers meet the policies of the Archdiocese for current and ongoing catechetical formation.
- The school provides ongoing inservice opportunities for faith formation.
- The school provides retreat and community faith experiences.
- Religion teachers are active Catholics who serve as models of faith.
- A variety of methods of religious instruction are observable.
- Theology teachers continue to be updated on the use of technology in their classes.

Self-Study

- Provide a list of religion faculty including their educational background, ongoing professional development, parish membership, and courses currently teaching.
- Clarify the list of teachers of religion in the Archdiocesan catechist certification database provided by the Office of Catholic Faith Formation with the teachers in your school.
- Describe the school’s plan for ongoing formation and professional development of religion teachers.

PARENTS AS PARTNERS

“Since parents have given children their life, they are bound by the most serious obligation to educate their offspring and therefore must be recognized as the primary and principal educators. This role in education is so important that only with difficulty can it be supplied where it is lacking. Parents are the ones who must create a family atmosphere animated by love and respect for God and man, in which the well-rounded personal and social education of

children is fostered. Hence, the family is the first school of the social virtues that every society needs. It is particularly in the Christian family, enriched by the grace and office of the sacrament of matrimony, that children should be taught from their early years to have a knowledge of God according to the faith received in Baptism, to worship him and to love their neighbor.” (*Gravissimum Educationis*, Pope Paul VI, 1965 #3)

Standard #5

The school maintains an active partnership with parents whose fundamental concern is the spiritual and academic education of their children. (Canon 796)

Best Practices

- The school communicates effectively with parents concerning the spiritual and academic education of their children.
- Parents are invited to participate in school liturgies and the spiritual activities of the school as appropriate.
- Parents are invited to assist with some of the service opportunities offered by the school.
- The school offers opportunities for parents to grow in their understanding of the faith/Catholic Identity of the school.

Self-Study

- Provide evidence of how parents are included in the process of faith formation of their children.
- Describe how the school supports students’ participation in their parishes and faith communities.

SERVICE

“More than any other program of education sponsored by the Church, the Catholic has the opportunity and obligations to be unique, contemporary, and oriented to Christian service...oriented to Christian services because it helps students acquire skills, virtues, and habits of heart required for effective service to others.” (*To Teach as Jesus Did*, USCCB, 1972, #106)

“The laity can also feel called, or be in fact called, to cooperate with their pastors in the service of the ecclesial community, for the sake of its growth and life. This can be done through the exercise of different kinds of ministries according to the grace and charisms which the Lord has been pleased to bestow on them.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1997, #910)

Standard #6

The school has a service-oriented outreach to the Church and the civic community after the example of Jesus Christ who said, “I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you.” (John 13:15)

Best Practices

- The school requires commitment to service by the students, and provides time for theological /personal reflection on their experiences.
- The seven themes of Catholic social teaching are regularly incorporated both into the curriculum and service projects:
 - Life and dignity of the Human Person
 - Call to Family, Community, and Participation
 - Rights and Responsibilities
 - Option for the Poor and Vulnerable
 - The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers
 - Solidarity
 - Care for God’s Creation
- Service activities deepen the students’ understanding of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.
- The school encourages and promotes students to a life-time commitment to service.

Self-Study

- Describe your service program(s) and the theological reflection component.
- List school volunteer service groups/opportunities.
- Give an example of an assignment or lesson plan that demonstrates theological reflection on service.
- Give an example of a service assembly or school service project which addressed one of the Catholic social justice teachings.
- Describe the relationship between campus ministry and the school’s service program.

SIGNS AND SACRAMENTALS

“Sacramentals are instituted for the sanctification of certain ministries of the Church, certain states of life, a great variety of circumstances in Christian life, and the use of many things helpful to man.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #1668)

Standard #7

The school uses signs, sacramentals, traditions, and rituals of the Roman Catholic Church.

Best Practices

- Every classroom has clearly displayed crucifixes.
- Iconography as well as the Church's artistic heritage is prominently displayed in classrooms and throughout the school.
- The Catholic Identity of the school is immediately clear through use of symbols and space.
- Students participate in a variety of traditions and rituals of the Church.
- Scripture quotations as well as quotations from the Church's Holy Men and Women are found in handbooks, public places, lesson plans, etc.
- The Liturgical seasons and holidays are observed and celebrated.

Self-Study

- Include in your self-study some digital or visual images of the Catholic Identity of your school.
- Select two significant symbols of your Catholic Identity and explain their significance to your school community.
- If your school is dedicated in honor of a church leader or founded on the heritage of religious community, explain how your school continues this dimension visually on campus.

EVANGELIZATION

"Although every ministry in a parish is an evangelizing ministry, Catholic schools have a unique opportunity and a grave responsibility to evangelize. One of the reasons for the Church's influence on the Christian formation of Americans is her vast presence in the field of education...the large number of Catholic schools makes possible a wide-ranging evangelizing effort, as long as there is a clear will to impart a truly Christian education." (*Ecclesia in America*, Pope John Paul II, #18)

Standard #8

All school personnel are actively engaged in bringing the Good News of Jesus into the total educational experience.

Best Practices

- All teachers and staff support the Catholic mission of the school.
- The teaching/learning process includes opportunities for students and teachers to share their own faith life with respect for persons of varied faith traditions.
- The school provides opportunities for teachers and staff to deepen their understanding of faith and the teachings of the Catholic Church, as well as a respect for persons of other religious traditions.
- The principal works with the teachers to incorporate Catholic teachings into their disciplines.
- The teacher connects the moral, ethical or spiritual ramifications to each area of study with the mission of the school, Sacred Scripture and the teachings of the Catholic Church.
- Hiring practices ensure support for the Catholic Identity of the school.
- The school fosters stewardship as a way of life that forms students and staff as disciples of Jesus Christ.
- The school's entire curriculum includes Catholic values infused throughout all academic areas.

Self-Study

- Provide examples of lesson plans in which a teacher has incorporated the moral, ethical, or spiritual ramifications of a specific Church teaching into his/her subject area.
- List the opportunities that exist for ongoing faith formation for faculty and staff.

MORAL DECISION MAKING

“Moral catechesis involves more than the proclamation and presentation of the principles and practice of Christian morality. It presents the integration of Christian moral principles in the lived experience of the individual and the community. The moral testimony must always demonstrate the social consequence of the Gospel.” (*National Directory for Catechesis*, p. 163)

Standard #9

The students learn that the Church's teachings on sexual morality and social justice are tools that free them for human happiness in this life and the next.

Best Practices

- Students are taught the dignity, destiny, freedom, and responsibility of the human person, together with the reality of sin and the power of God's grace to overcome it.
- The school's program and curriculum offer opportunities to form students in moral and ethical decision making based on Church teaching.
- The students continue to be engaged in the process of conscience formation through their study of the Church's moral teachings based upon Sacred Scripture and Catholic Social Teaching.
- The school offers students opportunities for conscience formation in all areas of their life.
- Faculty and students give witness to justice, mercy, peace and respect for life in their everyday actions and dispositions.
- The students not only study the social justice teachings of the Church, but bear witness to their meaning through their co-curricular activities and personal choices.

Self-Study

- List opportunities across school life for students and faculty to explore the Church's teaching on sexual morality, bioethics and social justice.
- Provide lesson plans as evidence of the opportunities for students and faculty to explore and apply the Church's social justice teachings.
- List examples of how teachers and students address issues pertaining to respect for personal sexual morality.
- Provide a teacher's lesson plan on conscience formation, as adapted to a specific grade level and class.
- List the opportunities for students and faculty to explore the Church's teaching on social justice.

CHARISM AND SPIRITUALITY

Standard #10

If the school is sponsored by a religious congregation or named for a patron of the Church, the charism of the religious congregation and/or the spirituality of the patron are infused into the school.

Best Practices

- The charism of a sponsoring religious community is evident in all facets of the school from its mission to its program.
- Portraits of the Pope and the Ordinary are present.
- If the school has been named for a patron of the Church, the school actively promotes the uniqueness and/or spirituality of the individual.
- The school educates its various constituents (students, parents, faculty, staff, and board/commission members) to the unique charism/spirituality of the religious congregation and/or Church patron.

Self-Study

- Describe how the charism of the sponsoring religious congregation and/or the spirituality of the named Church patron is evident in the school and its program.
- Provide evidence of how the school educates its various constituents (students, parents, faculty, staff, and board/commission members) to the unique charism/spirituality of the school.
- Describe a particular devotion, symbol, or program that has grown out of the charism or spirituality of the sponsoring Religious Congregation and/or named patron of the school.

SUMMARY QUESTIONS

Self-Study

- Given your self-study, what elements or practices stand out as particular strengths of the school in the area of Catholic Identity?
- What recommendations do you make for strengthening the Catholic Identity of the school?
- Who was responsible for preparing this section of your self-study, and how was information gathered from the larger school community? Specifically, how were the theology and campus ministry departments, other faculty and staff, administrators, and parents included in the process?