

The Pastoral Plan as a Foundation in living the Mission and Catholic Identity - Domain 1 - Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Education (NSBECS)

Introduction:

Rooted in and aligned with [Archbishop Etienne's Pastoral Plan, 2021](#), the Office for Catholic Schools created guidance for our school leaders in how to support staff, create a culture of Catholic understanding, an approach to living in the tensions of our time, and how to engage in sensitive conversations in our school communities.

Mission

Jesus said to his disciples, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matthew 28: 18-20. We move intentionally from **"my mission"** to **"God's mission"** as we all strive to discover and build the Kingdom of God in partnership with one another.

Focus

- **Encounter Jesus Christ** – Our Catholic schools exist to intentionally amplify the mission of the Pastoral Plan to "...make disciples of all nations..." Every action, prayer, conversation, and activity in our Catholic schools seeks to offer opportunities for students, parents, faculty/staff to experience a personal and communal encounter with Jesus Christ.
- **Accompany one another** – Our Catholic schools evangelize our faith in Jesus Christ to all we encounter: students, faculty/staff, parish and community members. Our work offers holy ground on which to build relationships centered on Christ. We recognize that we all come to the faith at various stages of our lives. Through listening hearts, and faithful witness, our schools provide an authentic community to form compassionate hearts working together to build and discover the Kingdom of God.
- **Live the Gospel** – Our Catholic schools encourage and teach discernment as all prayerfully consider using God-given gifts in service to our school, local, and global communities. Through this service and reflection, our school communities become catalysts for authentic discipleship. Prayer, sacraments and an informed conscience assist in developing a life-long response to care for those on the margins.

Values

I. Faith in Action

Jesus calls us to follow him, which requires complete surrender to the will of the Father in every part of our lives. We believe every moment presents an opportunity for words and actions to give glory to God.

Best Practices where Faith in Action is Evident:

le: Planning and celebrating the beginning of the year with an all staff retreat allowing an opportunity for the staff to be grounded in mission through prayer and discussion of the ministry of our work. NSBECS _____

le: Beginning the day with the staff in prayer - an opportunity for quick check-in and holding one another in prayer. NSBECS _____

le: Beginning all meetings and conferences with prayer that is intentionally focused on the work at hand and the connection to mission. NSBECS _____

le: Starting every class with prayer - this should be an intentional prayer that is inclusive of our diverse communities, speaks to our continued growth as a universal church, and aligns with the goals of our Pope. NSBECS _____

le: Aligning Catholic Identity Standards to all curricular endeavors - familiarizing oneself with the Catholic standards is a way to speak to them in other subject areas and cross reference secular standards with the Catholic world view. NSBECS _____

le: Reaching out to the parish in support of baptisms, confirmations, weddings, funerals. with student cards and messages. NSBECS _____

le: Promoting special liturgies of the parish to our school communities. NSBECS _____

II. Hope in Resurrection

Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. He is real, alive and available to each of us. Our hope in the future guides how we live our lives today.

Best Practices where Faith in Action is Evident:

le: Considering what Jesus would do in any situation - would he judge, criticize, ignore? Or would he embrace, love, and try to accept everyone as they come? Specific student community expectations can help with framing this behavior in the classroom. NSBECS _____

le: Reviewing the discipline policy through the lens of discipleship and framing expectations with an understanding of Jesus wanting the very best version of ourselves throughout the day. NSBECS _____

le: Being good stewards of our resources and environment. Jesus has entrusted us to be good stewards of our surroundings; how do our behaviors today affect the future? NSBECS _____

III. Truth in Love

God created every human heart for true love. We find the fullness of truth in love by loving God with all of our being and loving our neighbor as ourselves.

Best Practices where Faith in Action is Evident:

le: Including all members of the school into the community by inviting them in - even those who do not “look” like us, think like us or are part of our immediate friend groups. NSBECS _____

le: Encouraging all to expect the best in one another. NSBECS _____

le: Recognizing and acknowledging those acts of kindness. NSBECS _____

IV. Unity in Diversity

Unity is not a human invention, it is a gift from God. We are called to be the Body of Christ, with our diverse gifts united by the Holy Spirit. We participate in this unity when we give reverence to all of God's creation and surrender to God's will.

Best Practices where Faith in Action is Evident:

le: Inviting those whose ideas differ from ours to be a part of a productive and Catholic centered education utilizing conversational protocols that center around dignity, authenticity and discernment. NSBECS _____

le: Partnering with our families and communities to continue important conversations that center around our Catholic faith, how we live our faith, and how we can continue to learn from one another and grow in our faith. NSBECS _____

le: Teach students how to research, write and speak on challenging topics of diversity to inform and to persuade others to do the same. All done with patience, dignity and respect. NSBECS _____

Prior to engaging in a **courageous conversation**, the mission and values need to be clearly understood and communicated to all constituents. The school leader has been in conversation with the pastor seeking his insight, wisdom and perspective or from a trusted faith mentor.

Courageous Conversations Protocol Discussion

1. *Stay Engaged* - support each other by being present in the conversation without distraction
2. *Experience Discomfort* - keep an open mind and heart throughout the experience, despite being out of one's comfort zone
3. *Speak Your Truth* - your experience is your experience; support everyone's unique experience
4. *Expect/Accept Non-Closure* - the discussion may not conclude with specific solutions or action items. Ideas may need time for discernment.
5. *Understand Impact versus Intent* - one's intent may not align with the impact of a person's actions or beliefs. This must be recognized and reconciled individually.

For the Leader of the School Community: Creating a Classroom Culture of Shared and Mutual Respect

- I. Leaders establish relationships between teachers and the community for developing parameters and expectations grounded in respect for individuality and commitment to the expression of diverse world views.
- II. Leaders model these expectations by providing multi-viewed resources and providing time to explore diverse opinions on topics regardless of personal beliefs on the subject.
- III. Leaders must be respectful of each other's world views, regardless of personal opinion, and engage in conversations that are challenging and constructive, not argumentative and destructive.
- IV. Leaders provide a discussion protocol (the one suggested above, or one that your staff has agreed to use) to reference when social commentary is necessary - to both keep the discussion respectful and constructive, and also, to maintain the safety of diverse thought within the school community.
- V. Leaders provide the school community with the teachings of the Catholic Church - when or if the Catholic lens is not known, it is appropriate to ask for grace and time to delve into and research the topic more fully.
- VI. Above all, it is important that all principals (school leaders) understand school wide learning expectations and standards, classroom engagement expectations and access to resources to ensure all community members are actively engaged in furthering the mission of our Catholic faith, engaging in the work of discipleship, evangelization as we ground our work in Catholic Social Teachings as a response to the secular perspective.

For the Educator: Creating a Classroom Culture of Shared and Mutual Respect

It is imperative that all teachers create a classroom that provides a safe space for students of all backgrounds and beliefs to be open to share their views, beliefs, and understanding of what is happening in the world. To that end, these are best practices in how to establish a classroom culture that is conducive to learning, growing, and discernment:

- 1. Educators establish relationships between students and teacher, and amongst classmates by providing guidance for classroom rules, parameters and expectations grounded in respect for individuality and commitment to the expression of diverse world views.*
- 2. Teachers model these expectations by providing multi-viewed resources and providing time to explore diverse opinions on topics in their classrooms regardless of personal beliefs on the subject.*
- 3. Students must be respectful of each other's world views, regardless of personal opinion, and engage in conversations that are challenging and constructive, not argumentative and destructive.*
- 4. The teacher provides students with a discussion protocol (suggested protocol, or one that your staff has agreed to use) to reference when social commentary is allowed - to both keep the discussion respectful and constructive, and also, to maintain the safety of diverse thought within the classroom.*
- 5. Teachers provide students with the teachings of the Catholic Church - when or if the Catholic lens is not known, it is appropriate to ask for grace and time to delve into the topic more fully.*
- 6. Above all, it is important that all teachers and their principals (school leaders) understand school wide learning expectations and standards, classroom engagement expectations and access to resources to ensure all community members are actively engaged in furthering the mission of our Catholic faith, engaging in the work of discipleship, evangelization as we ground our work in Catholic Social Teachings as a response to the the secular perspective.*