

# WCSA

## STANDARDS & BENCHMARKS

### SUMMARY

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The first domain, **Mission and Catholic Identity**, encompasses Standards One through Four. This section begins with the following statement:

The Church's teaching mission includes inviting young people to a relationship with Jesus Christ or deepening an existing relationship with Jesus, inserting young people into the life of the Church, and assisting young people to see and understand the role of faith in one's daily life and in the larger society. "This unique Catholic identity makes our Catholic elementary and secondary schools 'schools for the human person' and allows them to fill a critical role in the future life of our Church, our country and our world" (The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, 1997). The following standards address Catholic identity and culture as vital to the mission of Catholic schools in the United States.

#### STANDARD 1

**An excellent Catholic school is guided and driven by a clearly communicated mission that embraces a Catholic Identity rooted in Gospel values, centered on the Eucharist, and committed to faith formation, academic excellence and service.**

#### BENCHMARKS

- 1.1 The governing body and the leader/leadership team ensure that the mission statement includes the commitment to Catholic identity.
- 1.2 The governing body and the leader/leadership team use the mission statement as the foundation and normative reference for all planning.
- 1.3 The school leader/leadership team regularly calls together the school's various constituencies (including but not limited to faculty and staff, parents, students, alumni(ae)) to clarify, review and renew the school's mission statement.
- 1.4 The mission statement is visible in public places and contained in official documents.
- 1.5 All constituents know and understand the mission.

#### STANDARD 2

**An excellent Catholic school adhering to mission provides a rigorous academic program for religious studies and catechesis in the Catholic faith, set within a total academic curriculum that integrates faith, culture, and life.**

#### BENCHMARKS

- 2.1 Religious education curriculum and instruction meets the religious education requirements and standards of the (arch)diocese.
  - 2.2 Religion classes are an integral part of the academic program in the assignment of teachers, amount of class time and the selection of texts and other curricular materials.
  - 2.3 Faculty who teach religion meet (arch)diocesan requirements for academic and catechetical preparation and certification to provide effective religion curriculum and instruction. *In Wisconsin, Benchmark 2.3 applies to all faculty whether they teach religion class or not. (See "Standards for Educators in Catholic Parishes and Schools", Wisconsin Catholic Conference 2008.)*
  - 2.4 The school's Catholic identity requires excellence in academic and intellectual formation in all subjects including religious education.
  - 2.5 Faculty use the lenses of Scripture and the Catholic intellectual tradition in all subjects to help students think critically and ethically about the world around them.
  - 2.6 Catholic culture and faith are expressed in the school through multiple and diverse forms of visual and performing arts, music and architecture.
  - 2.7 The theory and practice of the Church's social teachings are essential elements of the curriculum.
- State Benchmark 2.8 The school maintains an environment that reflects and promotes trust, Gospel values, the dignity of each person as a child of God, and develops these attributes in all learners.*

**STANDARD 3**

**An excellent Catholic school adhering to mission provides opportunities outside the classroom for student faith formation, participation in liturgical and communal prayer, and action in service of social justice.**

**BENCHMARKS**

- 3.1 Every student is offered timely and regular opportunities to learn about and experience the nature and importance of prayer, the Eucharist, and liturgy.
- 3.2 Every student is offered timely, regular, and age appropriate opportunities to reflect on their life experiences and faith through retreats and other spiritual experiences.
- 3.3 Every student participates in Christian service programs to promote the lived reality of action in service of social justice. *(The program should provide each student with a transformational experience and opportunity for reflection on how service is the lived action of the Gospel and Catholic faith teachings.)*
- 3.4 Every student experiences role models of faith and service for social justice among the administrators, faculty and staff.

**STANDARD 4**

**An excellent Catholic school adhering to mission provides opportunities for adult faith formation and action in service of social justice.**

**BENCHMARKS**

- 4.1 The leader/leadership team provides retreats and other spiritual experiences for the faculty and staff on a regular and timely basis.
- 4.2 The leader/leadership team and faculty assist parents/ guardians in their role as the primary educators of their children in faith.
- 4.3 The leader/leadership team collaborates with other institutions (for example, Catholic Charities, Catholic higher education, religious congregation-sponsored programs) to provide opportunities for parents/guardians to grow in the knowledge and practice of the faith.
- 4.4 All adults in the school community are invited to participate in Christian service programs to promote the lived reality of action in service of social justice.
- 4.5 Every administrator, faculty, and staff member visibly supports the faith life of the school community.

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The second domain, **Governance and Leadership**, encompasses Standards Five and Six. This section begins with the following statement:

Central to the mission of the Church is the work of Catholic school education. The success of this mission depends on the key components of effective governance, which provides direction or authority, and leadership, which ensures effective operations. Catholic school governance and leadership can be seen as a ministry that promotes and protects the responsibilities and rights of the school community. Governance and leadership based on the principles and practices of excellence are essential to insuring the Catholic identity, academic excellence, and operational vitality of the school. Although governance models vary based on the sponsorship of the school, those who serve on the governing body or leadership team in Catholic schools provide for an environment for the teaching of doctrine and Sacred Scripture, the building and experiencing of community, the serving of others, and the opportunity for worship.

**STANDARD 5**

**An excellent Catholic school has a governing body (person or persons) which recognizes and respects the role(s) of the appropriate and legitimate authorities, and exercises responsible decision making (authoritative, consultative, advisory) in collaboration with the leadership team for development and oversight of the school's fidelity to mission, academic excellence, and operational vitality. *(For the purposes of this standard, in the State of Wisconsin "governing body" includes the pastoral authority and the advisory education committee/commission or corporate board according to the Catholic educational governance requirements of the (arch)diocese.)***

**BENCHMARKS**

- 5.1 The governing body, representing the diversity of stakeholders, functions according to its approved constitution and by-laws.
- 5.2 The governing body systematizes the policies of the school's operations to ensure fidelity to mission, and continuity and sustainability through leadership successions.
- State Benchmark 5.2a The school maintains compliance with federal, state, local governing authority, canonical, and (arch)diocesan requirements. This includes facilities regularly utilized by the school community.*
- 5.3 The governing body, in collaboration with or through the actions of the leader/leadership team, maintains a relationship with the Bishop marked by mutual trust, close cooperation, continuing dialogue, and respect for the Bishop's legitimate authority.

5.4 The governing body, in collaboration with or through the actions of the leader/leadership team, maintains a constructive and beneficial relationship with the (arch) diocesan Education Office consistent with (arch)diocesan policy pertaining to the recognition of Catholic schools by the Bishop.

5.5 In the case of a parish school, the governing body, in collaboration with the leader/leadership team, maintains a relationship with the canonical administrator (pastor or designee of Bishop) marked by mutual trust, close cooperation, and continuing dialogue.

5.6 The governing body engages in formation and on-going training and self-evaluation for itself and the leadership team to ensure the faithful execution of their respective responsibilities.

*State Benchmark: 5.7*

*The pastoral authority for the school takes responsibility for the development and oversight of the leader/leadership team including recruitment, professional growth, faith formation, and formal assessment of the leadership team in compliance with (arch)diocesan policies and/or religious congregation sponsorship policies.*

## **STANDARD 6**

**An excellent Catholic school has a qualified leader/leadership team empowered by the governing body to realize and implement the school’s mission and vision.** *(For the purposes of this standard, in the State of Wisconsin “governing body” includes the pastoral authority and the advisory education committee/commission or corporate board according to the Catholic educational governance requirements of the (arch)diocese.)*

### **BENCHMARKS**

6.1 The leader/leadership team meets national, state and/or (arch)diocesan requirements for school leadership preparation and licensing to serve as the faith and instructional leader(s) of the school. *(Note: This benchmark requires professional development for the leadership team and religious certification for all leaders.)*

6.2 The leader/leadership team articulates a clear mission and vision for the school, and engages the school community to ensure a school culture that embodies the mission and vision.

6.3 The leader/leadership team takes responsibility for the development and oversight of personnel, including recruitment, professional growth, faith formation, and formal assessment of faculty and staff in compliance with (arch)diocesan policies and/or religious congregation sponsorship policies. *(“Faculty and staff” as used here includes the leader/leadership team.)*

6.4 The leader/leadership team establishes and supports networks of collaboration at all levels within the school community to advance excellence.

6.5 The leader/leadership team directs the development and continuous improvement of curriculum and instruction, and utilizes school-wide data to plan for continued and sustained academic excellence and growth.

6.6 The leader/leadership team works in collaboration with the governing body to provide an infrastructure of programs and services that ensures the operational vitality of the school.

6.7 The leader/leadership team assumes responsibility for communicating new initiatives and/or changes to school programs to all constituents.

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The third domain, **Academic Excellence**, encompasses Standards Seven through Nine. This section begins with the following statement:

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops affirms the message of the Congregation on Catholic Education that intellectual development of the person and growth as a Christian go forward hand in hand. Rooted in the mission of the Church, the Catholic school brings faith, culture and life together in harmony. In 2005, the bishops noted that “young people of the third millennium must be a source of energy and leadership in our Church and our nation. And, therefore, we must provide young people with an academically rigorous and doctrinally sound program of education” (Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary and Secondary School is in the Third Millennium, 2005). The essential elements of “an academically rigorous and doctrinally sound program” mandate curricular experiences—including co-curricular and extra-curricular activities— which are rigorous, relevant, research-based, and infused with Catholic faith and traditions. The following essential elements provide a framework for the design, implementation, and assessment of authentic academic excellence in Catholic school education from prekindergarten through secondary school.

## **STANDARD 7**

**An excellent Catholic school has a clearly articulated, rigorous curriculum aligned with relevant standards, 21st century skills, and Gospel values, implemented through effective instruction.**

### **BENCHMARKS**

7.1 The curriculum adheres to appropriate, delineated standards, and is vertically aligned to ensure that every student successfully completes a rigorous and coherent sequence of academic courses based on the standards and rooted in Catholic values.

7.2 Standards are adopted across the curriculum, and include integration of the religious, spiritual, moral, and ethical dimensions of learning in all subjects.

7.3 (*Grounded in Gospel values.*) Curriculum and instruction for 21st century learning provide students with the knowledge, understanding and skills to become creative, reflective, literate, critical, and moral evaluators, problem solvers, decision makers, and socially responsible global citizens.[]

7.4 Curriculum and instruction for 21st century learning prepares students to become expert users of technology, able to create, publish, and critique digital products that reflect their understanding of the content and their technological skills. (*For the purposes of this benchmark in Wisconsin, "expert" means proficient.*)

7.5 Classroom instruction is designed to intentionally address the affective dimensions of learning, such as intellectual and social dispositions, relationship building, and habits of mind.

7.6 Classroom instruction is designed to engage and motivate all students, addressing the diverse needs and capabilities of each student, and accommodating students with special needs as fully as possible. (*In Wisconsin, assessment of accommodating students with special needs is incorporated into the assessment of classroom instruction and addressing student needs/capabilities.*)

7.7 Faculty collaborate in professional learning communities to develop, implement and continuously improve the effectiveness of the curriculum and instruction to result in high levels of student achievement. (*For this benchmark, a professional learning community is any collaboration involving faculty, school leadership, and/or (arch)diocesan personnel.*)

7.8 The faculty and professional support staff meet (arch) diocesan, state, and/or national requirements for academic preparation and licensing to ensure their capacity to provide effective curriculum and instruction.

7.9 Faculty and professional support staff demonstrate and continuously improve knowledge and skills necessary for effective instruction, cultural sensitivity, and modeling of Gospel values.

7.10 Faculty and staff engage in high quality professional development, including religious formation, and are accountable for implementation that supports student learning. *This benchmark has been covered by Benchmarks 2.3, Wisconsin 2.3a, and 7.8.*

## **STANDARD 8**

**An excellent Catholic school uses school-wide assessment methods and practices to document student learning and program effectiveness, to make student performances transparent, and to inform the continuous review of curriculum and the improvement of instructional practices.**

### **BENCHMARKS**

8.1 School-wide and student data generated by a variety of tools are used to monitor, review, and evaluate the curriculum and co-curricular programs; to plan for continued and sustained student growth; and to monitor and assess faculty performance. (*Student data includes observation of student teacher relationship, report cards, student feedback and a wide variety of teacher assessment other than clinical assessment data.*)

8.2 School-wide and aggregated student data are normed to appropriate populations and are shared with all stakeholders.

8.3 Faculty use a variety of curriculum-based assessments aligned with learning outcomes and instructional practices to assess student learning, including formative, summative, authentic performance, and student self-assessment.

8.4 Criteria used to evaluate student work and the reporting mechanisms are valid, consistent, transparent, and justly administered.

8.5 Faculty collaborate in professional learning communities to monitor individual and class-wide student learning through methods such as common assessments and rubrics. (*Professional learning communities need not be formally designated as such.*)

*State Benchmark 8.6 The leader/leadership team oversees the establishment and maintenance of a secure and valid student permanent record.*

## **STANDARD 9**

**An excellent Catholic school provides programs and services aligned with the mission to enrich the academic program and support the development of student and family life.**

### **BENCHMARKS**

9.1 School-wide programs for parents/guardians provide opportunities for parents/guardians to partner with school leaders, faculty, and other parents/guardians to enhance the educational experiences for the school community.

9.2 Guidance services, wellness programs, behavior management programs, and ancillary services provide the necessary support for students to successfully complete the school program.

9.3 Co-curricular and extra-curricular activities provide opportunities outside the classroom for students to further identify and develop their gifts and talents and to enhance their creative, aesthetic, social/emotional, physical, and spiritual capabilities.

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The fourth domain, **Operational Vitality**, encompasses Standards Ten through Thirteen. This section begins with the following statement:

Catholic schools are temporal organizations committed to the Church and the mission of Catholic education including a commitment to a culture of excellence and rigor. These schools exist in a milieu of constant socioeconomic challenges grounded in continuous need for sustainable financial planning, human resource/personnel management and professional formation, facilities maintenance and enhancement, and the requirement for institutional advancement and contemporary communication. Catholic schools must adopt and maintain standards for operational vitality in these areas and define the norms and expectations for fundamental procedures to support and ensure viability and sustainability. When a school does not maintain standards for operational vitality, the continuation of academic excellence is in grave jeopardy. Over time, even an academically rigorous school with strong Catholic identity will not survive without operational vitality. Standards for operational vitality must focus on the “operation” of the school—how it works and how it is supported—in four key areas: finances, human resources/personnel, facilities, and institutional advancement. The leader/leadership team must manage each area and be subject to the direct oversight of the governing body in these matters.

#### **STANDARD 10**

**An excellent Catholic school provides a feasible three to five year financial plan that includes both current and projected budgets and is the result of a collaborative process, emphasizing faithful stewardship.**

#### **BENCHMARKS**

- 10.1 The governing body and leader/leadership team engage in financial planning in collaboration with experts in nonprofit management and funding.
- 10.2 Financial plans include agreed-upon levels of financial investment determined by the partners involved who may include but are not limited to parishes, dioceses, religious orders, educational foundations, the larger Catholic community, and responsible boards.
- 10.3 Financial plans define revenue sources that include but are not limited to tuition, tuition assistance/scholarships, endowment funds, local and regional partnerships, public funding, regional cost sharing, (arch)diocesan and/or religious communities’ assistance, foundation gifts, entrepreneurial options and other sources not listed.
- 10.4 Financial plans include the delineation of costs for key target areas such as instruction, tuition assistance, administration, professional development, facilities, equipment, technology, program enhancement/expansion, capital projects and other planned projects.
- 10.5 Current and projected budgets include a statement of the actual and projected revenue sources, indicating an appropriate balance among revenue sources, and a statement of actual and projected expenditures including the actual cost per child, benchmarked compensation/salary scales, and other health benefits and retirement costs.
- 10.6 Financial plans include educational materials for distribution to all members of the community explaining the total cost per child and how that cost is met by identifying the percentage of cost that is paid for by tuition and the remaining amount of cost that is supported by other sources of revenue.
- 10.7 The governing body and leader/leadership team provide families access to information about tuition assistance and long-term planning for tuition and Catholic school expenses.
- 10.8 The governing body and leader/leadership team ensure that appropriately developed financial plans and budgets are implemented using current and effective business practices as a means of providing good stewardship of resources.

#### **STANDARD 11**

**An excellent Catholic school operates in accord with published human resource/personnel policies, developed in compliance with (arch)diocesan policies and/or religious congregation sponsorship policies, which affect all staff (clergy, religious women and men, laity and volunteers) and provide clarity for responsibilities, expectations and accountability.**

#### **BENCHMARKS**

- 11.1 Human resource programs are professionally staffed at the appropriate level (i.e central office, school office) and ensure full compliance with human resource policies.
- 11.2 Human resource policies delineate standards for position descriptions including staff responsibilities and qualifications, hiring, compensation, and benefits, as well as standards for professional development, accountability, succession planning and retirement.

11.3 Human resource policies ensure that competitive and just salaries, benefits, and professional growth opportunities are provided for all staff.

11.4 Human resource policies ensure that institutional planning includes investment in personnel growth, health care and retirement.

## **STANDARD 12**

**An excellent Catholic school develops and maintains a facilities, equipment, and technology management plan designed to continuously support the implementation of the educational mission of the school.**

### **BENCHMARKS**

12.1 The school's facilities, equipment, and technology management plan includes objectives to support the delivery of the educational program of the school and accessibility for all students. *(The school's plan guides decision-making and is supported by the budget/financial plan.)*

12.2 The school's budget supports facilities, equipment, technology management with specific funds for capital improvements, depreciation, and replacement.

12.3 The school's purchasing, and physical and technological improvements are, by design, done in alignment with mission and the school's planning and curricular goals, and consistent with environmental stewardship. *(This benchmark has been covered by Benchmark 12.1.)*

## **STANDARD 13**

**An excellent Catholic school enacts a comprehensive plan for institutional advancement based on a compelling mission through communications, marketing, enrollment management, and development. *(that champions Catholic identity.)***

### **BENCHMARKS**

13.1 The communications/marketing plan requires school leader/leadership team and staff person(s) to insure the implementation of contemporary, multiple information technologies to reach targeted audiences, and to establish reliable and secure databases and accountability to stakeholders.

13.2 The enrollment management plan requires the governing body to review and the school leader/leadership team to supervise annual and continuous measurement and analysis of both enrollment and retention patterns for all student groups.

13.3 The development plan requires school leader/leadership team, in collaboration with the governing body, to insure that key strategies are in place to identify, grow and maintain significant funding prospects, including alumni(ae), over time and when appropriate.