

Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

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

I. What does this benchmark indicate for school performance?

Benchmark 7.2 is about *using* clearly defined academic standards as the basis for every part of the curriculum AND making sure that the standards and the resulting curriculum show that this is a *Catholic* school. It's about 1) *having* recognized, approved standards AND 2) *integrating* elements of Catholic identity.

Effective academic standards combine subject area knowledge and skills, pedagogical expertise, and understanding of cognitive and social/emotional development to delineate what students should know and be able to do at the end of a designated period of instruction. *Rigorous* standards designate learning goals that are challenging yet doable with effective instruction. Local Catholic schools use well developed national, state, and/or diocesan standards to insure that the subject area learning expectations in their own curriculum meet or exceed widely accepted expectations for college and career readiness.

At the same time, learning in every subject in a Catholic school should also require students to consider the knowledge, skills, and understanding related to that subject from a perspective of faith and a Catholic worldview. This means that the standards-based curriculum in every subject also cultivates student interest and engagement in discussion and a deepening understanding of Catholic values, beliefs, and teachings as these authentically relate to the subject matter. The curriculum integrates religious, spiritual, moral, and ethical considerations in ways that fit the topic, theme, or content and are developmentally appropriate.

II. As a review team member, what evidence do I look for?

Here are a few fundamental guiding question ask in order to be able to determine the extent to which the learning described in Benchmark 7.2 is taking place:

Look at the written curriculum at every grade, in every subject or course:

- Is it easy to identify which outside academic standards it is based on?
- Are the standards widely accepted as valid?

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- Are the standards appropriate to the subject and developmental level of the students?
- Are the standards rigorous (set challenging expectations)?
- Are grade and course standards aligned with school-wide standards?
- Do the standards allow for Catholic identity elements?
- Can one easily find Catholic identity elements in the curriculum based on the standards? (Look for such things as use of texts and other resources that relate to Catholic values, beliefs, teaching; look for essential questions that ask students to consider the underlying values or presence of principles of social justice in the content; look for assignments and/or assessments that ask students to integrate knowledge and understanding of the topic with Gospel values; look for assessments, assignments or activities that ask students to consider the ethical/moral implications of the content; look for assessments, assignments, activities that ask students to critique actions, decisions, applications related to the content that are contrary to Catholic values and beliefs, etc.)
- Is it clear that the written curriculum as stated could not be plopped down and taught *as is* in a public school without any revision? (In other words, what can a reviewer easily see in this curriculum that can be taught explicitly because this is a *Catholic* school?)
- Can one answer these questions affirmatively for all of the school's curriculum? Most? Some? Only here and there?

III. What are the key differences between the levels of the rubric?

At level **3-Fully Meets Benchmark**,

it is easy to identify specific, valid, outside academic standards (national, state, or diocesan) in the agreed-upon written curriculum in every subject across all grades. Clearly, the school expects teachers to intentionally address standards when they develop a curriculum. Furthermore, it is easy to find Catholic identity elements in the written, standards-based curricula in every subject

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across all grade levels. For a school at Level 3, curriculum in general gives evidence of both standards and Catholic identity. If outside standards are generally present but Catholic identity elements are not generally present, the school does not fully meet the benchmark.

At level 4-Exceeds Benchmark,

both the quality and the pervasiveness of the academic standards increases. The written curriculum in every subject and across grades delineates specific, valid, outside academic standards that are judged to be challenging and rigorous in preparing students for college, career, and life. The written curriculum for all subjects, courses, and grades (including at the unit level) articulates rigorous standards AND the resulting curriculum integrates Catholic identity elements at the course/grade level and at the unit level.

At level 2-Partially Meets Benchmark,

one can identify specific, valid, outside academic standards (national, state, or diocesan) in only parts of the written curriculum. Clearly, the school has not set expectations for teachers to intentionally address standards when they develop curricula. Sometimes it happens, and sometimes it doesn't. Similarly, one can find Catholic identity elements in only some of the written, standards-based curricula in every subject across all grade levels. It is important to note that for a school to operate at level 2, there must be indication of outside standards in parts of the curriculum. If the school's written curriculum shows some evidence of integration of Catholic identity elements but there is virtually no indication of outside standards, the school does not function at level 2.

At level 1-Does Not Meet Benchmark,

one finds virtually no indication of outside standards in the agreed-upon written curriculum. Integration of Catholic identity elements is random and/or ad hoc, included by individual teachers but not identified in the agreed-upon written curriculum. A school with no agreed-upon written curriculum operates at level 1.

NOTE: There are three essential components to look for in rating school performance on this benchmark: 1) the existence of an agreed-upon [written] curriculum, 2) identification of outside academic standards which are addressed in the curriculum, and 3) integration of Catholic identity elements as discussed above.

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All three elements must be present consistently throughout the curriculum for Level 3. When all three components permeate everything at high quality, the school operates at Level 4. If there is no agreed-upon curriculum and/or no outside standards, the school operates at Level 1. If there are standards but not much integration of Catholic identity, the school operates at Level 2.

IV. What are some key suggestions for improvement?

To move from level 1 to level 2,

- Identify valid national, state, or diocesan academic standards
- Ask teachers to map the standards onto the existing curriculum.
- As teachers begin to explicitly address the standards in their curricula, identify authentic connections with Catholic identity elements as well.

To move from level 2 to level 3,

- Initiate a curriculum development/review process in which teachers write curricula for all subjects and across grades that clearly identify both academic standards and integration of Catholic identity elements.
- Set clear expectations that every teacher will actually teach this agreed upon curriculum.

To move from level 3 to 4,

- Engage in ongoing curriculum review in which teacher teams (PLCs) expand the rigor of the standards for subjects and grade levels and the richness of integration of Catholic identity.
- Extend written curriculum to the unit level.

V. What are key terms for common understanding? (Refer to the Glossary for the key terms listed below.)

Academic standards
Rigorous Academic Standards
Catholic Identity Elements
Religious, spiritual, moral, and ethical dimensions of learning