

## Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

*7.3 Curriculum and instruction for 21<sup>st</sup> 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 citizens.*

### **I. What does this benchmark indicate for school performance?**

Benchmark 7.3 is about the kinds of work students are taught to do – required to do – in every subject and at every grade throughout the school. It describes the *results* we can see in learners at a Catholic school with excellent curriculum and instruction. The evidence that a school fully meets this benchmark includes actual descriptions of this kind of student work and thinking in the written curriculum for courses and subjects at each grade. In other words, one finds specific examples of the types of learning described in the benchmark (problem solving, reflecting, evaluating, synthesizing, creating, etc.) stated in the outcomes or objectives, in the assignments, in the assessments, and in the rubrics used to judge the quality of student work. One also finds specific examples of this same learning (problem solving, reflecting, evaluating, synthesizing, creating etc.) in the actual work students produce or perform when they complete the assignments and the assessments following the rubrics.

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

Here are some fundamental guiding questions which will help frame this item:

- What do students at a level and subject (3<sup>rd</sup> grade math, 7<sup>th</sup> grade social studies, calculus, etc.) do when they are showing they are creative, solving problems, reflective, critical, making decisions, etc.?
- What is the classroom frequency of this evidence of student learning?
- Are the learning outcomes built into the written curriculum (stated in objectives, built into assignments and assessments designed ahead of time) on a consistent **and planned** basis?
- How regularly are these teaching strategies observable in the classroom?
- How often do teachers collaborate to improve and expand the quality and frequency of student learning in these ways?

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- Is technology integrated into student learning and observable in student work products?

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

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

the written curriculum states and student work shows that this kind of learning is expected and taught *regularly and across the entire school*. Integrating problem solving, reflecting, evaluating, creating, etc. into curriculum and instruction is intentional and ongoing. Integration of technology as a tool is evident in student learning.

#### At level **4-Exceeds Benchmark**,

the written curriculum states and actual student work shows that this kind of learning is expected and taught *in all subject areas at all levels*. Problem solving, reflecting, evaluating, creating, etc. is “deep in the genes” of the school’s curriculum and instruction. It is planned and continuously improved to such an extent that student work is worthy of recognition beyond the school.

The assignments and assessments through which students demonstrate their learning reflect not only academic rigor consistent with standards for the subject area, but also elements of Catholic identity such as Gospel values and the Church’s social teachings. Integration of technology as a tool is highly evident in student learning.

#### At level **2-Partially Meets Benchmark**,

the written curriculum states and actual student work shows that this kind of learning is expected and taught *in some classrooms, in some subjects*. The 21<sup>st</sup> century learning referred to in the benchmark is present, but it is occasional and ad hoc, dependent on individual teachers. Teachers are not systematically held accountable for integrating such learning into their classes. Some do; some don’t. At level 2, it is pretty easy to find written curriculum and classrooms where student work does not routinely show problem solving,

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creating, critiquing, etc. Integration of technology as a tool is somewhat evident in student learning.

### At level **1-Does Not Meet Benchmark,**

the written curriculum states and actual student work shows that this kind of learning is *generally not evident*. It is a rarity to see students doing assignments or being assessed on more complex learning that requires more than recalling information, simple understanding, and defined applications. There is little evidence of integration of technology in student learning.

NOTE: Avoid scoring on this benchmark by counting. When the Review Team looks at evidence, they should be able to use good judgment about where the school currently operates:

- If the kind of learning described in this benchmark is *planned and deeply integrated into curriculum everywhere that all teachers teach with good results that keep improving*, this scores a 4;
- If teaching and assessing students for problem solving, evaluating, reflecting, creating, etc. is *a clear expectation* for all written curriculum and actual instruction, and if it is *clearly happening most of the time*, this scores a 3;
- If the school has set general goals for including more of these 21<sup>st</sup> century skills but has not yet actually integrated these skills into an agreed upon written curriculum that teachers are required to teach so that some teachers may teach the skills and some may not, and *one cannot say that most do teach them*, this scores a 2;
- If the school is not yet intentional about the need to incorporate these skills into teaching and assessing – teachers do what they do, this scores a 1.

### IV. What are some key suggestions for improvement?

#### To move from level 1 to level 2,

- Structure regular conversations among teachers and administrators about what should be included in an excellent curriculum for 21<sup>st</sup> century students
- Provide professional development and shared readings/web explorations to deepen teacher understanding, knowledge, and skills

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- Encourage teachers to begin including some 21<sup>st</sup> century elements in what they teach.

### **To move from level 2 to level 3,**

- Engage in a formal curriculum review process in which faculty together examine the current curriculum in light of standards
- Identify 21<sup>st</sup> century skills appropriate for each subject and grade
- Revise and/or develop a written curriculum that includes content, outcomes, assessments, and teaching strategies and which integrates the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills
- Organize teachers into professional learning communities to a) write the curriculum, b) implement the curriculum, and c) examine results to make improvements
- Build a structure and processes/procedures for supporting teachers in this work and holding them accountable

### **To move from level 3 to 4,**

- Make student demonstration of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills a priority for continuous improvement in the work of the professional learning communities
- Encourage and reward innovation and interdisciplinary work
- Market and communicate success

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

Knowledge

Understanding

Skill

Creative thinking

Reflective thinking

Literate

Critical thinking

Moral evaluating

Evaluator

Problem solver

Decision maker

Socially responsible global citizen

Performance

Product

Student work

Real world problems

Written curriculum