

## Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring 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.*

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

Benchmark 7.1 is about ensuring that every student in a Catholic school gets a rigorous standards-based curriculum integrated with Catholic values. Two things are necessary: 1) having a *coherent* curriculum based on rigorous standards and integrated with Catholic values, and 2) designing the course of studies to make sure that *every* student benefits from it. It is important to note that a curriculum is an “explicit and comprehensive plan developed to honor a framework of standards,” (Jay McTighe and Grant Wiggins, *The Understanding by Design Handbook*). Standards themselves are just part of a curriculum. In this way, the Common Core initiatives or AP standards are not a curriculum, but may be a component of a curriculum along with Catholic teachings, assessments, curriculum maps, etc.

*Coherence* in a curriculum relates to alignment and growth in learning. When a school has a coherent curriculum, it is easy to see clear progression of knowledge, skills, and dispositions from year to year. The program in every subject intentionally develops intellect and values consistent with readiness for the next level, and ultimately readiness for college, career, and life. Thus, the curriculum is “backward designed” from rigorous exit standards and contains clear expectations and progress markers at each grade level to ensure at least one year of learning growth in one year of school, leading to successful demonstration of the exit standards upon graduation.

A school that fully meets this benchmark designs and requires the *sequence* of courses and/or grade level subjects so that students achieve the learning designated in the progress markers (grade level or course standards/outcomes), and in the final exit standards. If the school allows students to select different course sequences, or if the school places students into different course sequences based on prior performance on standardized or classroom-based assessments, educational testing, or other evidence of learning, the school must make sure that all students experience curriculum and instruction that will allow them to successfully achieve the designated progress markers and exit standards regardless of the particular sequence of classes they take.

In excellent Catholic schools, the curriculum - aligned to rigorous academic standards - includes integration of Catholic values across all subjects at curricular depths appropriate to the subject area content. Some subject areas will interweave Catholic teaching at a greater depth complexity than others. For example, in subject areas such as English Language Arts, Social Studies, or Religion, Catholic teaching and values may

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be more closely and directly related to content as well as classroom environment and affective learning; in subject areas such as Physical Education or Mathematics, Catholic teaching may come into play more authentically in the affective domain of being in the class. (See also Benchmark 7.2)

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

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

When examining the written curriculum (W.C.):

- Does the W.C. clearly identify which standards are being addressed in this course? In this subject by grade level? In this unit?
- Are the delineated standards valid, research-based, appropriate, and rigorous? Does the written curriculum emphasize critical thinking as evidence of student learning or is growth measured in traditional skill based testing **alone**?
- Can you see intentional and sufficient growth in learning based on the standards and curriculum, from year to year and/or course to course? OR, is there a lot of repetition? OR, is there shifting of which standards are used from grade to grade or course to course?
- Does the W.C. specify content, learning outcomes/objectives, assessments, resources, strategies, and pacing so that schools have enough information to determine that students are expected to grow in knowledge, understanding, skills, and dispositions from year to year, based on the standards?
- Does the W.C. identify Catholic values and other elements of Catholic identity which are authentically integrated into the curriculum?

When examining the sequence of classes that students take:

- Is each student required to take the same sequence of classes?
- If students take different sequences of classes, does the W.C. show that they are expected to achieve the same standards, no matter which sequence they take?

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

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

the school's written curriculum identifies rigorous academic standards for all subjects/courses and grade levels. There is a required sequence of classes and the written curriculum for the required sequence(s) of classes shows alignment with the standards and is designed to produce growth in learning from year to year, course to course. The written curriculum shows integration of Catholic values at curricular depths appropriate to the subject area content. There is an accountability system in place at each school to measure student growth, and this system is shared and owned by classroom teachers.

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

the school's written curriculum delineates rigorous academic standards for all subjects/courses and grade levels. The written curriculum for the required sequence(s) of classes clearly shows alignment with the standards to produce growth in learning from year to year, course to course. Evidence is readily available to show careful mapping of curriculum content, learning outcomes and assessments to ensure that all students make steady and sufficient progress on the standards. No matter which sequence of classes a student is required to or elects to take, the curriculum for those classes will lead to achievement of the academically rigorous standards. A written curriculum in all subjects shows the integration of Catholic values at curricular depths appropriate to the subject area content.

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

the school's written curriculum includes references to standards being addressed across subjects and courses/grade levels. There is little or no evidence that the courses have been aligned to the standards and sequenced in order to intentionally focus on specified growth in learning from year to year. Although individual classes include designated standards, the sequence of classes a student takes does not necessarily result in achievement of a delineated set of standards. The standards achieved for any given student are more ad hoc. Written curriculum for some classes shows integration of Catholic values.

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

there are no delineated academic standards which provide a basis for developing a coherent sequence of classes for students.

### **NOTE:**

One of the consistent, research-based strengths of Catholic schools is the practice of holding all students who enroll to high standards. Benchmark 7.1 reinforces and operationalizes this practice by setting the clear expectation that excellent Catholic schools will use rigorous academic standards as a framework for designing curriculum for each student – regardless of the specific classes they take – that will require them to progress from year to year and result in their meeting high graduation requirements that prepare them for college, career, and life.

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

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

- Provide time and support for faculty to research standards. Provide appropriate instructional materials and training to implement a deep understanding of standards as a foundation for the written curriculum
- Adopt/adapt appropriate, rigorous academic standards for all subjects
- Provide professional development relating to standards-based, backward-designed curriculum
- Develop written curriculum that identifies the standards to be addressed

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

- Use the delineated standards to vertically align courses in sequences that ensure growth in learning on the standards from year to year, course to course
- Provide continuing professional development relating to standards-based, backward-designed curriculum

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

- Map the curriculum to identify gaps and/or overlaps between sequences and courses

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- Provide time and support for teachers to work in professional learning communities to monitor student learning results that will provide evidence that: 1) students are achieving the delineated standards, 2) students are growing in learning throughout classes and from year to year, 3) students are achieving the delineated high academic standards regardless of the sequence of courses they take, and 4) learning in all classes includes elements of Catholic identity

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

Standards  
Rigorous curriculum  
Coherent curriculum  
Backward designed  
Progress markers

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

- 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

## 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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**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.**

- 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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*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.*

- 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

## Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

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

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

Benchmark 7.4 is about the authentic integration of technology to assist students in demonstrating mastery of what they are expected to know and be able to do. It is used in a student-centered learning environment to promote independent learning. Students complete assessments that require higher-level thinking and real-world applications, including collaboration and communication with resources outside the school such as experts in a field.

Technology is a meaningful tool in daily instruction and central to the culture of the school. It fosters creativity and students use it in innovative ways through blogs, wikis, student-centered websites, podcasts and media based presentations. Students have access to and are able to analyze information that will inform their learning and can consistently demonstrate the ability to determine the truth, accuracy and relevance of that information. Teachers are proficient in using technology and media as an instructional and assessment tool and receive ongoing professional development and engage in independent learning to increase their skills. Specific data is available to show that improved student learning is supported by the technology tools that are used. Most importantly, there is demonstrated evidence that technology is improving student learning, especially as a tool for differentiation of instructional delivery and production of student work products.

There is a technology plan in place that assures significant, designated resources will be available to sustain a high quality information/technology/media program. The technology references or is grounded in research based technology standards.

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

Here are a few fundamental guiding questions that will help frame this item:

- How has the integration of technology impacted evidence of student learning?
- What specific examples can be shared to show how technology is providing students the opportunity to be creative and engage in solving real-world problems?

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

- Is there evidence of student use of simulations, models, digital media, and other innovative apps and software?
- In what ways has technology enabled teachers to differentiate instruction for students with different learning styles and strengths?
- What evidence is present to show that students have a “choice and voice” to be assessed uniquely?
- What type of data is used to inform the planning and use of technology?
- What challenges have been encountered regarding technology and how have those been addressed?
- What tangible evidence shows that students are achieving higher levels of proficiency and critical thinking in learning targets as a result of technology use?
- What feedback has been solicited from students and parents on the use of technology in school?

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

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

there is evidence of significant student involvement in creating or using blogs, wikis, student-centered websites, podcasts, and digital media presentations. Technology use is integrated into all subject areas and project-based learning is used often, is interdisciplinary in nature, and targets critical thinking and problem solving. Students are able to work independently and have the freedom to demonstrate their understanding in multiple ways. They demonstrate the ability to use a variety of means to access information and assess its accuracy. Students have access to digital devices at times during the school day.

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

there is evidence of widespread student involvement in the creative use of media. Technology removes the limitations of the traditional classroom and transforms the way students learn. Project-based learning is reflective of critical thinking and students having a choice and voice in how they demonstrate learning that reaches beyond the classroom. Students have the skills and responsibility to design, launch and maintain what they create. They consistently demonstrate an ability to determine the best means of accessing information and analyzing information for truth, accuracy, and relevance. Students have access to their own digital device.

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

there is evidence that some students are involved in creating or using one or more of the following: blogs, wikis, student-created websites, podcasts, and digital media presentations. Projects are content-specific and teacher directed. Students can access information from a variety of sources but have a limited capacity to analyze that information for accuracy or relevance. The use of technology is dependent upon the dispositions and abilities of individual teachers.

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

there is evidence that some students are involved in the personal use of media, but their access to technology in school is limited. Projects involving technology are infrequent and not an expectation in the curriculum. Students have difficulty finding information they need and lack the ability to analyze it for accuracy or relevance.

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.

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

### To move from level 1 to level 2

- Provide education to improve technology skills of teachers, students and parents
- Look at the practices and procedures used to determine access to technology

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

- Move from projects to project-based learning that allows students to tackle realistic problems as they would be solved in the real world
- Support parent engagement and interaction with technology
- Increase student control over their learning
- Connect content to promote interdisciplinary learning and assessment that makes use of technology

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

- Base the integration of technology school-wide on the 4C's: communication, creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking
- Use technology in new and meaningful ways that are authentic and unique
- Put policies, practices, and procedures in place to support digital citizenship
- Embrace the transformative nature of technology and structure the learning environment to support the 4C's.

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

Technology

Media

Authentic integration

Interdisciplinary

Publish

Project-based learning

Digital Citizenship

## **Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks**

*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.*

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

“The Catholic philosophy of education has always paid special attention to the quality of interpersonal relations in the school community, especially those between teachers and students. This concern ensures that the student is seen as a person whose intellectual growth is harmonized with spiritual, religious, emotional, and social growth.”

-The Holy See’s Teaching on Catholic Schools – 2006

Benchmark 7.5 is about the impact of social-emotional learning on academic success. Education today must serve a threefold purpose: information learning, critical thinking, and preparation for life. Teachers look at the content and techniques utilized and review the underlying relationships and structures that support risk taking in the classroom, where experiences that bring excitement and motivation which enhances learning abound. A classroom atmosphere of trust and social and emotional safety assists students in feeling confident to explore new and innovative journeys. Respect for independent thinking, support and understanding of feelings and emotions, and recognition of student accomplishments provide the foundation for positive nurturing relationships between student and teacher and student with student; from these confidence will flourish for all students.

Teachers continually ask if enough is expected from students academically, not only in terms of outcomes on tests, but in terms of challenging their intellect in effective ways. That students become successful faith-filled adults who are responsible not only for themselves but for the common good is clearly communicated. Teachers empower students to have confidence in their abilities and in the strengths they bring to the school from their homes and families.

### **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 point to examples of the extent to which the learning described in Benchmark 7.5 is actually taking place in the school:

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*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.*

- What experiences are students exposed to that develop habits of mind in class? In extracurricular activities?
- Are tasks authentic and require students to use the habits of mind?
- What processes/programs work best for different groups of students?
- What dispositions are being fostered in lesson design and assessments?
- Do curriculum documents reflect the intentional inclusion of the habits of mind and Gospel values?
- To what degree do students have the opportunity to connect with outside resources in the parish, local and global community?
- What aspects of the learning community support risk-taking and participation in real-world unpredictable situations?
- How does the school support students in their learning through authentic assessment, positive grading, meaningful homework, collaboration and team work?

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

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

students are eager to share ideas and ask questions. The affective dimensions of learning are clearly articulated in the curriculum and teachers understand and address the social, emotional, and spiritual needs of their students. Activities and assessments address critical thinking and the diverse needs of the students. Teachers use teaching and assessment strategies that respect the culturally based strengths of the child. They help students understand how to evaluate their own work and give them opportunities to do so. Gospel values permeate all aspects of the classroom experience.

At level **4-Exceeds Benchmark**,

## Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

*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.*

students confidently share ideas and ask questions. Independent thinking is encouraged and students are fully engaged in learning. Students are committed to doing quality work and persevere to completion. Activities and assessments school-wide are intentionally designed to support students' feelings, emotions and self-esteem. Gospel values provide the context for all aspects of the classroom experience. Assessments for dispositional growth are done intentionally at all grade levels. Student and community data is used to make decisions related to the social, emotional and spiritual needs of the students. Teachers identify the existing strengths of individual students and help them to recognize and develop those strengths. They celebrate many different kinds of accomplishments in their classrooms.

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

students follow classroom procedures but in some cases are reluctant to share ideas or ask questions. Students are engaged in classroom instruction and some exhibit the ability to select habits of mind appropriate to intellectual and social situations. Habits of mind are integrated based on the experience and expertise of individual teachers. Dispositions are not clearly articulated across disciplines or grade levels.

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

the learning environment does not support the sharing of ideas, questioning, or authentic engagement. There is a lack of attention to the diversity of the students and teachers lack the cultural competencies needed to prepare them for the future. Instruction is content-based with no intentional application of habits of mind.

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

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

- Provide professional development to assist teachers in recognizing the importance of the affective dimensions of learning and strategies to address them in the classroom
- Incorporate dispositions that support the social, emotional, and spiritual growth of students into the learning environment.

## **Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks**

*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.*

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

- Formally assess the culture, climate, and environment to create a caring faith-filled community for all students
- Conduct surveys to assure a match between student and teacher perceptions of the learning environment
- Be culturally competent in developing and using dispositions that will be effective for your student population

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

- Clearly define dispositions in a Catholic context and describe their place in the curriculum.
- Have students self-assess their thinking and ability to adapt to predictable and unpredictable situations.
- Make sure that assessments for dispositional growth are done intentionally at all grade levels
- Use student and community data to understand whom you serve

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

Habits of mind  
Dispositions  
Learning environment

## **Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks**

*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.*

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

Benchmark 7.6 is about excellent instruction that engages learners while meeting their individual needs and assisting them in achieving learning goals. Instruction that involves students in active, cooperative processes supports them in transferring knowledge and skills from one content area to another and in learning at greater rates. Instruction that engages students' minds and has meaning for them leads to the development of critical thinking skills. Instructional practices should help to stimulate the natural curiosity for learning which exists in all students.

Well designed, differentiated and engaging instruction provides for student choice, allowing the student to take charge of his/her learning. In this type of environment, teachers facilitate and coach as students develop the skills to think critically, evaluate and create. Interdisciplinary units are constructed to provide students with opportunities to engage in authentic problem solving activities.

Instructional strategies that are designed to authentically engage students in problem solving, critical thinking, communication and creativity help students to develop a depth of knowledge that is very important to the learning process. Instruction must be differentiated according to each student's learning needs. Therefore, students who excel are provided with challenging lessons, just as the student who struggles is afforded supports that enable him/her to reach his/her full potential. Without this level of instruction, the school risks the ability to develop the whole child, as required by our church.

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

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

- Is student work that requires critical thinking and problem solving available for review?
- Do student and parent survey data provide evidence that students are authentically engaged in the learning process?

## Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

*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.*

- Does student performance data show regular and consistent learning for all students?
- Do classroom walk-through and teacher evaluation aggregate data indicate high levels of authentic student engagement?
- Is student work that indicates involvement in cooperative learning tasks and problem solving activities available for review?
- Do classroom walk-through and teacher evaluation aggregate data show differentiated learning tasks and assessments?

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

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

there is evidence of significant student involvement in meaningful learning processes. Technology use is integrated into almost all subject areas to both differentiate instruction and to create additional avenues for student engagement and critical thinking. Students sometimes have learning choices and a voice in demonstrating how they learn. There is some evidence that assignments are differentiated and differentiated instructional methods are observed in most classrooms, most of the time. Students frequently demonstrate an ability to evaluate information and analyze it for truth, accuracy, and relevance.

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

there is evidence of widespread student involvement in meaningful learning processes. Technology is utilized appropriately to both differentiate and to create additional avenues for student engagement and critical thinking. Project-based, interdisciplinary learning is evident in all content areas. Students have a choice and voice in how they demonstrate learning. Assignments are differentiated and ask the students to think, create, synthesize and engage. Students have the skills and responsibility to design, launch and maintain what they create. They consistently demonstrate an ability to evaluate the best means of accessing information and analyzing information for truth, accuracy, and relevance.

## Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

*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.*

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

some students are involved in meaningful learning processes. Technology use is integrated into some subject areas to both differentiate instruction and to create additional avenues for student engagement and critical thinking. Teachers make decisions about how learning will take place with little input from students or regard to specific student needs. Differentiated assignments and methods are rarely observed. Student use of analysis and evaluation is sporadic and only encouraged for a small number of students.

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

there is little evidence that students are involved in meaningful learning processes that meet their needs. Instruction is not differentiated and the teacher follows a set curriculum that is inflexible. Special needs students do not receive accommodations. There is a “one size fits all” sense in instructional practice.

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.

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

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

- Provide education to improve instructional skills of teachers to increase differentiation practices in the classroom and monitor the implementation of these practices
- Provide professional development on how to use technology to enhance instruction and student engagement and monitor the implementation of the use of technology in the classroom

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

- Move from projects to project-based learning in order to increase student engagement and critical thinking
- Provide teachers with examples of best practices that increase student engagement

## Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

**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.*

- Provide teachers with examples of best practices that increase opportunities for student choice
- Provide teachers with additional professional development on the use of technology to increase differentiated learning opportunities
- Connect content to promote interdisciplinary learning

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

- Use technology in new and meaningful ways that are authentic and innovative
- Put policies, practices, and procedures in place to support increased and consistent differentiated learning to make it the norm
- Provide resources to assist teachers in developing engaging interdisciplinary units that meet the individual needs of learners
- Embrace the transformative nature of technology and structure the learning environment to offer instruction that is consistently differentiated and rich in critical thinking, synthesizing, and creativity

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

Technology

Media

Interdisciplinary

Project-based learning

Digital Citizenship

## Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

*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.*

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

Benchmark 7.7 is about the way the school is organized. It is about structuring teachers' work around a professional learning communities model. In such a model, teachers meet in designated teams based on teaching assignments to plan and improve curriculum and instruction. Together, they examine and agree on what to teach (standards-based content and skills) and how to teach it well for all their students. They take responsibility for carrying out team decisions and for making changes to their own teaching if warranted, based on team analysis of student learning results.

While Benchmark 8.5 (also about learning communities) focuses even more directly on the *assessment* responsibilities of teachers in professional learning communities, this benchmark focuses on the fundamental commitment of the school to adopt the PLC model in the first place. Research shows that the continuous improvement of curriculum and instruction necessary for high levels of student achievement happens most effectively when teachers work in same subject or same grade teams. Thus, Benchmark 7.7 requires excellent Catholic schools to structure teacher assignments in ways that allow and require them to work in relevant teams. Further, this benchmark indicates that the work of these teams focuses specifically on developing and implementing curriculum and instruction, and monitoring how well it works on the basis of what and how well students learn.

The simple fact that teachers sometimes (or even often) meet together to plan lessons and activities does not equate with establishing a functioning learning communities model. In professional learning communities, teachers are *accountable* to each other and to the school for working together to increase achievement.

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

Here are a few fundamental guiding questions to ask in order to be able to point to examples of the extent to which the practices described in Benchmark 7.7 are actually taking place in the school:

- Are there clearly established teacher teams? Can one find a list of clearly established teacher teams? Can each teacher identify his/her team? Is there a

## Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

*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.*

schedule that identifies regular meeting dates for teams? Is every faculty member included on a team?

- Are there minutes for professional learning community meetings? Do the minutes reflect discussion and identification of learning goals for students and collected learning results data? Do the minutes indicate analysis of student data and decisions made about what to do next so that more students learn?
- Are there indications that teachers feel responsible for what happens at their team meetings? As a result of professional learning community meetings what has changed in lesson plans because of team decisions?

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

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

the school is organized so teachers meet regularly in designated subject/grade teams to work on delivering agreed upon curriculum and instruction so that all students meet high expectations. PLCs are the way teachers work throughout the school.

At level **4-Exceeds Benchmark**,

not only are active PLCs the way teachers work, but the quality of their work reflects a knowledge and understanding of best practices in developing, implementing, and improving curriculum and instruction. They know how to use data collection strategies and technology to analyze a wide range of relevant student learning data that includes standardized tests and classroom based assessments. Their measures allow them to determine both current performance and student growth in order to set learning goals and devise instructional plans to reach them. At level 4, the school has invested in professional development to help teachers work more effectively in their PLCs. “Effectively” is clearly measured in terms of student achievement.

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

## Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

*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.*

the school recognizes that students benefit when teachers work together and it is beginning to find concrete ways to support teacher teams, although the teams may be ad hoc and/or voluntary. Teachers generally value working together, but do not yet feel accountable to adjust their own curriculum and instruction in light of their collaboration. The teams that do exist may look more at school-wide issues (like increasing technology use in classes) rather than setting measurable goals for increasing student achievement in their classes.

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

teacher autonomy in making curriculum and instruction decisions is generally the norm and the preferred way of operating.

NOTE: Accurate and useful scoring of school performance on this benchmark depends hugely on a correct understanding of “professional learning communities.” Virtually every Catholic school places value on community, often speaking of the school “family.” Thus, it can be easy to mistake congeniality and collegiality for “learning community.” Of course teachers meet together; of course they share materials, etc. when asked. To be operating in a PLC model, the teams must be planned, regular, intentional, goal oriented, and accountable for learning results. (See glossary for definition.)

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

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

- Begin to build a culture of collaboration
- Provide opportunities for teachers to work in teams and to experiment with the learning community model; reward them for doing so

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

- Make a case for moving to a learning community model and achieve consensus to try it
- Organize all teachers into PLCs
- Provide professional development about the work of PLCs
- Monitor and support the PLCs

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

## **Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks**

*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.*

- Provide ongoing professional development for teacher teams focused especially on acquiring, analyzing and using learning results to set goals, adjust instruction, and increase student achievement and growth
- Design creative ways to ensure that every professional in the school is part of a relevant professional learning community
- Provide regular opportunities and set expectations for teams sharing learning results in public faculty meetings

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

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

Data team

Value added

## **Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks**

*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.*

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

Benchmark 7.8 is about the need for all faculty and professional support staff to meet (arch)diocesan, state, and/or national requirements for academic preparation and licensing to ensure their capacity to provide effective curriculum and instruction. It is imperative that Catholic schools employ faculty who are committed to students and their learning. Faculty members and professional staff understand the content that they are teaching and how to teach students well. This level of expertise is needed in order to provide a quality curriculum and to ensure that students are learning the skills and knowledge necessary for future success.

In order for faculty and professional support staff to remain current in pedagogical practices and information about how students learn, on-going applied and job embedded professional development is readily available for all staff members. This assists them in developing the skills and knowledge necessary to be effective Catholic educators.

Recognition of exemplary educators for their outstanding service to Catholic education is important, as is participation in professional organizations. Sharing knowledge and skills with other Catholic school educators permits the experiences of our best educators to have an impact on other educators and their students.

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

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

- Does a blind review of teacher credentials indicate faculty members have achieved licensure from the state in which they teach?
- Does a blind review of teacher credentials indicate that faculty members and professional support staff have earned academic degrees indicating a level of knowledge necessary to successfully teach particular content areas?

## Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

**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.*

- Is there evidence that faculty and professional staff have shared their knowledge and expertise through writing, presenting or facilitating professional development sessions, or leading a professional learning community?
- Are individual professional learning plans for teachers available for review?
- Are faculty members and professional staff able to discuss their own professional growth needs and their plans to meet those needs?
- Are faculty members and professional staff able to articulate what they have learned through a professional learning community, a personal learning network or through professional reading in the last year?

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

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

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. Compliance with these requirements is factored into all employment decisions. Most faculty members and professional support staff are provided on-going, applied professional development opportunities and an individualized professional development plan.

At level **4-Exceeds Benchmark**,

all 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. All faculty and professional support staff are provided on-going applied professional development opportunities and complete an individualized professional development plan. Faculty members are recognized for outstanding service to the profession for participation in professional organizations, presenting at professional conferences, serving as facilitators for professional workshops, or authoring educational publications. Faculty members and professional support staff are members of a professional learning community or have a personal learning network to support them in their own professional growth.

## **Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks**

*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.*

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

some faculty members and professional support staff meet (arch)diocesan, state, and/or national requirements for academic preparation and licensing. Compliance with these requirements is factored into most employment decisions. On-going, applied professional development opportunities are offered at times and some faculty members have individualized professional development plans, but these are not required. A few faculty members and professional support staff are members of a professional learning community or have a personal learning network to support them in their own professional growth.

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

few faculty members and professional support staff meet (arch)diocesan, state, and/or national requirements for academic preparation and licensing. Compliance with these requirements is not considered when making employment decisions. Professional development opportunities are unavailable and/or not required.

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

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

- Support faculty and professional staff in achieving licensure
- Provide faculty and professional staff with on-going, applied professional development
- Create opportunities for faculty and professional staff to participate in a professional learning community or personal learning network

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

- Encourage and provide membership in professional organizations
- Provide all faculty and professional staff with on-going, applied professional development
- Use licensure attainment as a criteria when making employment decisions

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

## **Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks**

*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.*

- Encourage faculty and professional staff to share their knowledge and skills with others via a variety of formats, including presenting at workshops, publishing articles and facilitating workshops, conducting webinars
- Require all teachers to attain licensure or to meet all (arch)diocesan criteria
- Financially support membership in professional organizations for all faculty members and professional staff

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

Job embedded professional development  
Professional development  
Professional learning communities

## **Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks**

*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.*

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

Research indicates that the most important factor in student learning is an effective teacher. To be an effective Catholic school teacher, not only must a teacher know his/her students and effective pedagogy, but the teacher must also know the Catholic faith and be a model of Christ's love for the student.

Being a model of Christ's love and teaching children about the Good News of Christ is the most important thing that Catholic school faculty and professional staff do during the day. In order to do this well, faculty and professional staff members must be fully formed in the faith and have excellent knowledge of the Gospels and Catholic doctrine.

Students who attend Catholic schools are from diverse backgrounds. Planning effective instruction to meet the needs of an ever increasing diverse student population takes skilled faculty and professional staff who know their students. In order to assist students in meeting their potential, teachers must know about each student's family life, the family's religious beliefs, the child's family structure, and the student's socioeconomic status. Knowledge of how students fit into their community and society is important for faculty and professional staff if they are to build a relationship with a student that will facilitate the learning process. If "education is an intimate conversation between souls" as described by Richard Jacobs, then teachers must know the about the culture that forms their students.

In addition, teachers' knowledge of effective pedagogy and best practices which incorporate gospel values, and sensitivity to each child's context continually improves. The teachers' commitment to more actively involve students in content results in a greater depth of understanding and a more thorough application, synthesis, and evaluation of knowledge. This results in greater academic growth and deeper faith formation for students. It is the faculty members' commitment to continuous improvement of professional skills that propels students toward academic excellence and a meaningful faith life in Christ.

## **Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks**

*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.*

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

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

- Does aggregate teacher evaluation data indicate that teacher instructional practices are effective?
- Does aggregate classroom walk-through data indicate that teacher instructional practices are effective?
- Does the school have a plan to help teachers grow in the faith each year?
- Does faculty and professional staff survey data indicate that they are receiving sufficient and effective professional development in educational issues, instruction, curriculum, the faith, and cultural sensitivity?
- Does parent and student survey data indicate that the instruction provided is effective?
- Does parent and student survey data indicate that faculty and professional staff are sensitive to students' cultures and knowledgeable about the cultures of their students?
- Does parent and student survey data indicate that faculty and professional staff are models of our Catholic faith?
- Is there evidence that worship and prayer opportunities are provided for all faculty and professional staff?
- Does student performance data indicate that students are benefiting from effective instruction in all academic areas?
- Is there evidence that students are growing in their knowledge of the faith and living the Gospel values being modeled and taught?
- Is there evidence that students and faculty and staff are respectful of all people and cultures?

## Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

*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.*

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

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

faculty and professional support staff demonstrate annual growth in their knowledge of and in the skills necessary for effective instruction, cultural sensitivity, and the modeling of Gospel values. The school establishes goals for effective instruction, cultural sensitivity, and the modeling of Gospel values. The school can provide some evidence of student growth in cultural sensitivity and Gospel values. Faculty members align professional goals with school goals and intentionally review their own progress and improvement in effective instruction, cultural sensitivity, and modeling of Gospel values. Evidence of these goals is visible in school climate.

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

faculty and professional support staff consistently demonstrate and continuously improve knowledge and skills necessary for effective instruction, cultural sensitivity, and the modeling of Gospel values. The school establishes integrated goals for effective instruction, cultural sensitivity, and the modeling of Gospel values and can provide evidence of student growth in cultural sensitivity and Gospel values throughout and at the conclusion of school programs. Individual faculty members align professional goals with school goals and intentionally review their own progress and improvement for effective instruction, cultural sensitivity, and modeling of Gospel values. Evidence of these goals is visible in the school climate.

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

some faculty and professional support staff demonstrate growth in their knowledge of and in the skills necessary for effective instruction, cultural sensitivity, and the modeling of Gospel values. The school can provide some evidence of student growth in cultural sensitivity and Gospel values. A few faculty members write professional goals and intentionally review their own progress and improvement in effective instruction, cultural sensitivity, and modeling of Gospel values. Evidence of these goals is visible in the school climate.

## **Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks**

*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.*

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

few faculty and professional support staff demonstrate growth in their knowledge of and in the skills necessary for effective instruction, cultural sensitivity, and the modeling of Gospel values. Ongoing professional development is not an expectation to which faculty are held. There is little or no evidence of student growth in cultural sensitivity and Gospel values. Faculty members do not write professional goals for effective instruction, cultural sensitivity, and/or the modeling of Gospel values.

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

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

- Provide professional development for faculty and professional staff in effective instruction, cultural sensitivity, Gospel values, and the faith
- Create ways to measure student growth in cultural sensitivity and Gospel values for both faculty/staff and students
- Ask faculty and professional staff members to write goals to focus their efforts in the areas of effective instruction, cultural sensitivity and Gospel values

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

- Write school goals to improve instruction; grow in knowledge of cultural sensitivity, Gospel values, and the faith
- Ask faculty and professional staff members to write goals to focus their efforts in the areas of effective instruction, cultural sensitivity and Gospel values and that align with school goals
- Provide regular professional development in the areas of effective instruction, cultural sensitivity, Gospel values and church doctrine

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

- Write integrated school goals to work towards continuous improvement in building effective instructional practices, cultural sensitivity, and Gospel values
- Analyze student growth data to determine ways to improve instruction
- Analyze student data to determine additional steps to improve cultural sensitivity

## **Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks**

*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.*

- Provide additional opportunities for faculty and professional staff members to learn more about Church doctrine and Gospel values
- Provide for additional ways for faculty and professional staff members to interact with student families in an effort to learn more about each child and their cultural background

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

Professional development

## **Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks**

**7.10** *Faculty and staff engage in high quality professional development, including religious formation, and are accountable for implementation that supports student learning.*

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

“Jesus shared with you his teaching ministry. Only in close communion with Him can you respond adequately... Yours is a great gift to the Church, and a great gift to your nation.”  
-Blessed Pope John Paul II

Benchmark 7.10 is about the creating an environment that supports the continuous professional and spiritual growth of faculty and staff. Professional growth is necessary to serve students with increasingly diverse learning needs. Personal spiritual formation is the foundation of the Catholic identity and culture of the school.

Professional development and faith formation offerings are cohesive, systemic, and directly tied to student learning. There exists a direct link between which data sources surface as critical learning needs, how professional development resources are allocated, and how faculty are held accountable for implementation and student learning outcomes and for faith formation of students. Professional development for all content areas including religious education are abundant.

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

Here are a few fundamental guiding questions which will help determine the extent to which the professional development described in Benchmark 7.10 is actually taking place at the school:

- What opportunities exist for faculty and staff to gather as a faith community?
- How does the faith formation of the faculty and staff impact the Catholic culture of the school?
- How are decisions about professional development made?
- To what extent is student learning data used to inform the professional learning experiences of the teachers?
- Does the school have a written plan that ties together professional development, resource allocation, and student learning outcomes?

## Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

**7.10** *Faculty and staff engage in high quality professional development, including religious formation, and are accountable for implementation that supports student learning.*

- What support structures are in place for individual teachers to implement professional development concepts and strategies?
- Do teachers have individual professional development plans tailored to their needs and interests? How do these efforts tie to school-wide goals?
- Apart from calendared professional development days, how are the implementation of knowledge and skills acquired through profession development discussed, analyzed, and adjusted throughout the year?

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

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

faculty and staff meet or exceed required levels of Religious Education Certification (REC), and there are frequent opportunities to gather in prayer, attend retreats, etc. Faculty and staff are conscious of social trends and issues facing students and create a learning environment that supports Catholic values in dealing with them. Assessments are in place to assess faith knowledge and formation. Professional development is tied to student learning goals and teachers are accountable for implementation and effectiveness. Professional development, data-gathering, and collaboration are used by all teachers and are tied directly to the continuous improvement efforts of the school. Teachers have access to and use support structures to implement new instruction and assessment strategies.

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

Faculty and staff model a lifelong commitment to spiritual growth and make the spiritual formation of the students integral to everything they do. Faculty and staff have created a true community of faith at the core of their identities.

Assessment data is used to inform religious instruction, climate and culture. School improvement goals are built on staff consensus and based on student learning data. A vision of success for all students in all subject areas is realized through effective job-embedded professional development. Professional

## Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

**7.10** *Faculty and staff engage in high quality professional development, including religious formation, and are accountable for implementation that supports student learning.*

development resources are a priority in budgeting. Teachers are comfortable as action researchers and responsible risk-taking is encouraged.

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

faculty and staff have or are working on attaining the required levels of religious education certification but certification is pursued individually. Some teachers effectively integrate Catholic teachings and dispositions into the teaching of content areas. An overall school plan based on student needs determines what professional learning will be offered, but implementation is inconsistent and data is not used to hold teachers accountable for results.

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

faculty and staff do not have the required levels of religious education certification. Religion instruction is taught in “religion class” with little integration into other academic areas. Professional development is sporadic and unfocused, with no direct tie to student learning.

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

### To move from level 1 to level 2

- Require all faculty and staff to attain or have a plan to attain the required level of religious education certification.
- Assess the extent to which Catholic teachings are integrated into all areas of the curriculum and make that inclusion an expectation in the written curriculum.
- Identify the student learning needs of greatest concern and determine professional development based on those needs.

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

- In addition to all faculty and staff meeting or exceeding required religious education certification, provide opportunities for everyone to gather as a faith community.
- Make it a shared responsibility to provide social and emotional support for all students in the context of the Catholic faith

## **Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks**

**7.10** *Faculty and staff engage in high quality professional development, including religious formation, and are accountable for implementation that supports student learning.*

- Design/acquire and administer assessment tools that assess faith knowledge and formation
- Collaboratively create a school-wide plan to improve student learning that is data-based and includes accountability measures for teachers and specific learning outcomes for students
- Allocate professional development resources to support implementation at the school and classroom levels

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

- Assure that adult religious formation increases and solidifies knowledge of the faith in a systematic and cohesive way through planned professional development and faith formation programs
- Be certain instructional practice improves academic student learning responsible for both religious education and academic achievement
- Prioritize the inclusion of opportunities for faculty, staff and students to grow in their faith and support each other in a true community of faith
- Use data to assess all areas of school life, both academic and spiritual/emotional
- Complete an annual review of student learning needs and work collaboratively to confirm or revise goals based on multiple data sources
- Allow teachers to self-assess their professional learning needs based on school-wide initiatives and provide job-embedded support
- Encourage responsible risk-taking and action research to engage teachers and challenge them to continually improve practice

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

Job-embedded professional development