

Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

2.1: *Religious education curriculum and instruction meets the religious education requirement and standards of the (arch)diocese.*

I. What does this benchmark indicate for school performance?

This benchmark indicates that religious education curriculum is aligned with the religious education requirements and standards of the (arch)diocese. The Catholic school has a clearly stated written religious education curriculum that describes anticipated outcomes for each course and/or grade level and is aligned with the (arch)diocesan curriculum framework. School leadership ensures that appropriate resources (documents, texts, media, etc.) that support curriculum and instruction are available.

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

These are some questions which will help to frame this item:

- Does the religious studies curriculum reflect a thoughtful use of the (arch)diocesan requirements and standards for religious education?
- If dealing with a high school: Are *The Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age* (USCCB) a guiding force in the selection of textbooks, and the content of the curriculum?
- To what extent are school's curriculum framework, the courses of study, the syllabi and the teachers' lesson plans integrated from year to year according to (arch)diocesan requirements?
- Are developmentally appropriate learning resources used at every level to advance curriculum requirements?

Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

2.1: *Religious education curriculum and instruction meets the religious education requirement and standards of the (arch)diocese.*

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

At level 3- Fully Meets Benchmark,

the school's religious education program meets the requirements of the (arch)diocesan directives for curriculum.

At level 4-Exceeds Benchmark,

the school's religious education program indicates that learning activities are in place at every level to engage students in the curriculum in an active and meaningful way. Careful attention has been paid to the development of curriculum from year to year with a particular focus on the rigor of the course of studies and the age appropriate activities associated with the topics under consideration.

At level 2-Partially Meets Benchmark,

suggests that there is evidence that curriculum and instruction meet some of the requirements of the (arch) diocesan standards, but there is insufficient evidence that the religious education program is fully aligned with the requirements and standards of the (arch) diocese.

At level 1-Does Not Meet Benchmark,

there is no evidence that curriculum and instruction are aligned with the requirements and standards of the (arch) diocese.

Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

2.1: *Religious education curriculum and instruction meets the religious education requirement and standards of the (arch)diocese.*

IV. What are some key suggestions for improvement?

To move from level 1 to level 2,

- Develop a religious education curriculum that includes and highlights some elements of the requirements and standards provided by the (arch)diocese.
- Provide resources, including but not limited to, texts and media, that support and advance those requirements and standards in instruction.
- Collaborate with the (arch)diocesan religious education director to develop the religious education curriculum.

To move from level 2 to level 3,

- Revise curriculum to be consistent and aligned with the requirements and standards of the (arch)diocese.
- Provide learning resources including, but not limited to, textbooks, media, etc. that are aligned with the curriculum and support instruction.
- Develop a regular review system of these resources.
- Collaborate with the (arch)diocesan religious education director to strengthen the existing religious education curriculum.

To move from level 3 to 4,

- Develop a systematic review and revision schedule of the written curriculum using the cross-curricular elements of vertical alignment, scaffolding, and developmentally appropriate rigor and aligned learning activities.
- Align this review system with elements provided by the (arch)diocese.
- Involve and consult with the (arch)diocesan religious education director in the evaluation and on-going revision of the (arch)diocesan religious education program.
- Develop a review system of learning resources including, but not limited to, textbooks, media, etc.
- Provide faculty training on new resources.

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

Vertically Aligned
Scaffolded

Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

2.2: Religion classes are an integral part of the academic program in the assignment of teachers, amount of class time and the selection of texts and other curricular materials.

I. What does this benchmark indicate for school performance?

This benchmark indicates that the school holds comparable expectations in rigor, student engagement and academic weight for religion classes as it does for other academic programs. Qualified Catholic teachers are assigned to teach religion classes. These teachers are able to present content correctly and confidently. These teachers are Gospel role models for the students. At the secondary level, qualified teachers hold degrees in theology or related areas. The school schedules consistent and sufficient class time for meaningful, engaging religious instruction. The school gives the appropriate consideration to the budget for instructional materials for religious education as it does for other academic areas.

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

An examination of the following items will assist in reviewing this area:

- Do class schedules reflect appropriate time allotments for religion classes?
- Is there evidence of teacher qualifications and preparation via lesson plans, professional development, or catechist certification?
- What are the publication dates of textbooks and other instructional materials?
- Are scope and sequence charts, curriculum maps and other course and topical sequences available?

Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

2.2: Religion classes are an integral part of the academic program in the assignment of teachers, amount of class time and the selection of texts and other curricular materials.

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

At level 3- Fully Meets Benchmark,

religion classes receive the same treatment as other academic disciplines regarding scheduling and allocation of resources. Religion teachers are qualified and certified as catechists at appropriate levels.

At level 4-Exceeds Benchmark,

religion classes are innovative and highly engaging, and integrate the study and practice of religion into students' lives. Instructional materials and other experiences assist in this effort throughout the school. Religious themes and topics are integrated across the curriculum. Student-generated media that interprets and communicates the meaning of the religious content are available throughout the school. Religion teachers are highly qualified and certified as catechists at advanced levels.

At level 2-Partially Meets Benchmark,

there is a regular, organized religious education program in place. It is not given the same attention as other subjects in the selection of qualified teachers and of instructional materials. Less instructional time is allocated for religious instruction in the schedule.

At level 1-Does Not Meet Benchmark,

the school deemphasizes religious instruction. There is a religious education program but there is no priority given to how it is organized, nor to the qualifications of teachers, or to the quality of instructional resources. Class time is more easily and frequently reallocated to other activities than is class time of other academic subjects.

Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

2.2: Religion classes are an integral part of the academic program in the assignment of teachers, amount of class time and the selection of texts and other curricular materials.

IV. What are some key suggestions for improvement?

To move from level 1 to level 2,

- Allocate consistent scheduled time to religious instruction.
- Establish a program to credential religion teachers.
- Acquire texts, textbook series, and other up-to-date instructional materials for religion classes.
- Align religious instructional materials to grade-levels, development levels, and curricular expectations.
- Keep religion class times intact when altering the schedule.

To move from level 2 to level 3,

- Review the qualifications of religion teachers and makes changes necessary to assure that those who are teaching religion are qualified to do so.
- Assign criteria consistent with those of the other curriculum areas when choosing textbooks and instructional materials for religion classes. The scheduling of religion classes is given the same priority as that of the other classes.

To move from level 3 to 4,

- Ensure that catechist certification is obtained by all religion teachers.
- Allocate specified time frames and an equitable allocation of class time for religion in relation to other academic areas.
- Collaborate to develop, evaluate and refine religion classes to ensure they are integrally woven into the larger academic program.
- Utilize innovative techniques to engage students in religious education classes.

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

Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

2.3: *Faculty who teach religion meet (arch) diocesan requirements for academic and catechetical preparation and certification to provide effective religion curriculum and instruction.*

I. What does this benchmark indicate for school performance?

This benchmark indicates that the faculty members responsible for religious instruction meet the (arch) diocesan requirements for academic and catechetical preparation and certification.

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

The following questions should assist in framing this item:

- Is there a listing of the (arch) diocesan requirements for the preparation of faculty who teach religion in the school?
- Is there a list faculty members including both their academic degrees and catechetical certification?
- Is there a statement of professional development requirements in view of catechetical certification?
- Is there a list of faculty members who are progressing toward catechetical certification and their progress in the program?
- Is there a plan to maintaining and advance certification for teachers of religious education?
- Do teachers of religious education participate in professional development to address both pedagogical needs and content areas?

Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

2.3: *Faculty who teach religion meet (arch) diocesan requirements for academic and catechetical preparation and certification to provide effective religion curriculum and instruction.*

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

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

the school is fully in compliance with the expectations of the (arch)diocese.

At level **4-Exceeds Benchmark,**

the faculty meets and exceeds the (arch) diocesan requirements. This is evident in efforts to create and maintain professional learning communities within and beyond their school community to deepen their professional expertise.

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

not all of the teachers assigned to teach religion are qualified or in a preparation program to provide qualification.

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

teachers are assigned to teach religion without fulfilling (arch) diocesan requirements.

Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

2.3: *Faculty who teach religion meet (arch) diocesan requirements for academic and catechetical preparation and certification to provide effective religion curriculum and instruction.*

IV. What are some key suggestions for improvement?

To move from level 1 to level 2,

- Establish a method so all teachers of religion are in programs to meet (arch) diocesan requirements.

To move from level 2 to level 3,

- Enroll all faculty who do not meet (arch) diocesan standards regarding academic and catechetical preparation in a program to provide certification.
- Ensure that completing certification is mandatory.

To move from level 3 to 4,

- Form professional learning communities for religious education faculty.
- Seek ongoing opportunities to deepen their expertise and improve their instructional skills for effective teaching within and beyond their school communities.
- Develop a plan to integrate developments in catechesis into the religion teacher professional development.

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

Professional Learning Community

Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

2.4: *The school's Catholic identity requires excellence in academic and intellectual formation in all subjects including religious education.*

I. What does this benchmark indicate for school performance?

This benchmark indicates that every student's learning experience provided by the school, including religious education, must promote excellence in academic and intellectual formation, both of which are constituent elements of its Catholic identity.

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

The following questions should assist in framing this item:

- Does the school's mission statement philosophy clearly state that the school is committed to academic excellence?
- Does the curriculum guide indicate the anticipated outcomes for all subjects at all levels? Are these outcomes in line with established norms for academic excellence? Is the religion department held to these norms?
- Do student assessments in various forms demonstrate competency in communication, creativity, collaboration and critical thinking?
- Do grading policies and rubrics indicate the academic rigor of the religious and non-religious academic programs?
- Does the Professional Development Plan for the faculty contain a growth trajectory committed to academic excellence? Is the religion faculty held to these standards?
- Is there evidence that the school actively attempts to integrate faith, culture and life through its academic programs? For example, do teachers share ideas and evaluate attempts to integrate faith, culture, and life on a timely basis?

Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

2.4: *The school's Catholic identity requires excellence in academic and intellectual formation in all subjects including religious education.*

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

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

the school provides evidence of its commitment to student excellence by clearly articulating standards and expectations in all disciplines. This commitment extends to the faculty professional development program as well.

At level **4-Exceeds Benchmark,**

the school demonstrates a sustained commitment to academic excellence and innovative academic growth throughout all its programs. The entire curriculum integrates faith, culture, and life effectively for students in tangible, measurable ways.

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

the school demonstrates some standards and expectations of academic excellence for its students and faculty.

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

the school does not present evidence that attention is given to excellence in academic and intellectual formation in all subjects, including religion for students.

Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

2.4: *The school's Catholic identity requires excellence in academic and intellectual formation in all subjects including religious education.*

IV. What are some key suggestions for improvement?

To move from level 1 to level 2,

- Establish a curriculum policy requiring measurable academic and intellectual formation of students be evident in all subjects, including religion.
- Provide appropriate professional development opportunities to assist faculty in achieving these goals.

To move from level 2 to level 3,

- Develop and implement clearly articulated standards and measurements of student progress.
- Develop performance expectations that demonstrate academic and intellectual achievement in all subjects including religion.

To move from level 3 to 4,

- Demonstrate student mastery and success through multiple measures.
- Demonstrate student understanding of the integrated nature of faith, culture and life.

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

Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

2.5: *Faculty uses the lenses of Scripture and the Catholic intellectual tradition in all subjects to help students think critically and ethically about the world around them.*

I. What does this benchmark indicate for school performance?

This benchmark indicates that the faculty has a fluency and affinity for Scripture and the Catholic intellectual tradition. Faculty members are able to make that knowledge meaningful in the context of the students' lives and use subject areas to demonstrate opportunities to think critically and ethically about choices and consequences of choices. Age and developmentally appropriate instruction, performance, discussion, and projects, including service projects, provide opportunities to learn and practice these skills.

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

These are some questions which will help to frame this item:

- Do professional development plans for faculty formation include understandings of the Gospel and the Catholic intellectual tradition?
- Are assessments of the faculty's ability to interpret and instruct with these lenses used?
- Do student assessments measure students' ability to think critically and ethically about the world around them?
- Do faculty or professional learning community meeting agendas demonstrate intentional discussions and curriculum planning on the use of Scripture and the Catholic intellectual tradition?
- Do curriculum outcomes reflect an expectation that Scripture is used throughout the school? How are these measured?

Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

2.5: *Faculty uses the lenses of Scripture and the Catholic intellectual tradition in all subjects to help students think critically and ethically about the world around them.*

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

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

faculty infuse Scripture and the Catholic intellectual tradition in their lessons. Examples of student work and communications reflect critical thinking arising from these efforts in all subject areas.

At level **4-Exceeds Benchmark,**

faculty planning, student work, school communications and activities reflect an active engagement with moral discussions formed in Scripture and the Catholic intellectual tradition. Students demonstrate the ability to make connections across curricular lines based upon their encounter with the Catholic intellectual tradition.

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

the curriculum does not provide evidence that faculty use the lenses of Scripture and/or Catholic intellectual tradition in all subjects.

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

little attention is given to the use of Scripture and Catholic intellectual tradition to help students learn to think critically and ethically. The faculty, itself, is not adequately prepared to access and utilize these sources.

Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

2.5: *Faculty uses the lenses of Scripture and the Catholic intellectual tradition in all subjects to help students think critically and ethically about the world around them.*

IV. What are some key suggestions for improvement?

To move from level 1 to level 2,

- Work together as a faculty and an administration to understand what is meant by a Scriptural lens and the Catholic intellectual tradition.
- Create meaningful common learning experiences to bring clarity and increase comfort levels of the adults in the building before designing student exercises.
- Provide students with effective critical and ethical thinking about the world around them.

To move from level 2 to level 3,

- Determine the best manner of integrating Scripture and the Catholic intellectual tradition into the school's academic culture across all disciplines.
- Create pilot programs to test and evaluate the progress of the effort.

To move from level 3 to 4,

- Develop regular opportunities in all subject areas for students to participate in lectures, group discussion, debates, etc. that allow them to demonstrate their growing understanding and assimilation of Scriptures and the Catholic intellectual tradition.
- Embed performance assessments in the curriculum.
- Aligned service projects and other experiences with the school objectives to attain this goal.
- Use the faculty work with Scripture and the Catholic intellectual tradition as a basis for further faculty growth and development.

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

Catholic Intellectual Tradition

Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

2.6 Catholic culture and faith are expressed in the school through multiple and diverse forms of visual and performing arts, music, and architecture.

I. What does this benchmark indicate for school performance?

This benchmark requires that there be substantial evidence of the Catholic faith throughout the school. In addition to prevalent symbols of the Catholicism, a rich and diverse Catholic culture permeates the environment, and finds expression through the visual and performing arts as well as through music and architecture.

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

These are some questions which will help to frame this item:

- Are symbols of the Catholic faith present throughout the building? (e.g. crucifixes, statues, pictures, etc.)
- Do these symbols communicate the essence of the school's mission?
- Does the school's architecture and use of space reflect the larger Catholic culture?
- Are Scripture-based motivational bulletin boards and/or posters present?
- Are samples of artwork created by students and/or faculty displayed in the school and posted on the school's website?
- Do prayer services include music and the arts combining the talents of students and faculty?
- Are there photos of students, faculty, and parents at events reflecting the Catholic faith and culture posted on social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter and on the school's website?
- Do the art projects, school plays, and band/chorus concerts afford students the opportunity to explore the Catholic faith and culture?
- Are students making the connection between issues of faith and 3-dimensional artwork?

Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

2.6 Catholic culture and faith are expressed in the school through multiple and diverse forms of visual and performing arts, music, and architecture.

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

At level 3- Fully Meets Benchmark,

the school clearly and visibly demonstrates its Catholic culture and faith in an intentional way. Architecture, décor, and arts programs and projects reflect the Catholic faith and culture.

At level 4-Exceeds Benchmark,

the integration of Catholic symbols and expressions of Catholic culture and faith in the arts and architecture is expressed in a manner that distinguishes the school as Catholic to external observers. Students demonstrate a clear appreciation of the Catholic faith and culture through the arts. The arts programs and projects are designed to invite students into a deepening of their faith.

At level 2-Partially Meets Benchmark,

the expression of Catholic culture and faith is not easily apparent to anyone coming into the school. Arts programs and projects are not rooted in the Catholic faith and culture. Students are not encouraged to deepen their faith through their experiences in the arts programs.

At level 1-Does Not Meet Benchmark,

it is difficult to recognize the school as Catholic due to the lack of evidence of the school's Catholic culture. While there may be a concern for the spiritual in evidence, it is not distinctly Catholic.

Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

2.6 Catholic culture and faith are expressed in the school through multiple and diverse forms of visual and performing arts, music, and architecture.

IV. What are some key suggestions for improvement?

To move from level 1 to level 2,

- Review the mission statement and clarify its distinctive Catholic character.
- Enhance the school's Catholic identity by augmenting the number and type of Catholic symbols in evidence throughout the school.
- Encourage faculty contributions to integrate the arts, music and prayer in lessons to exemplify Catholic culture and faith.
- Encourage students to explore their faith through meaningful opportunities to participate in art programs that reflect a Catholic culture.

To move from level 2 to level 3,

- Increase the prevalence and thematic relevance of Catholic religious symbols throughout the school. The school's mission and traditions ought to be reflected for the public by these symbols.
- Plan with the faculty to institute a reflective process where students are encouraged to co-create with God through their work and critical reflections on the arts.

To move from level 3 to 4,

- Enhance the Catholic environment by highlighting the context of the school within the presentations of Catholic culture and faith.
- Make architectural adjustments where possible to highlight the central features of the faith in a structural manner. (e.g. placement of statues, shrines, chapels, etc.)
- Integrate the visual arts, performance arts, and music so the arts are viewed as a critical experience in accessing Catholic culture and deepening students' faith lives.
- Provide opportunities for students to think ethically, critically and creatively about the world around them through the use of the arts in partnership with the faculty of history, science, and literature.

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

Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

2.7: *The theory and practice of the Church's social teachings are essential elements of the curriculum.*

I. What does this benchmark indicate for school performance?

The school consciously and seamlessly integrates the social teaching of the Catholic Church (CST) into its curriculum. It permeates the school culture, is evident in instruction and interactions, and it motivates an orientation toward service and a concern for justice and compassion.

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

These are some questions which will help to frame this item:

- Are curriculum outcomes aligned with the Church's social teaching?
- Do specific programs of study at the secondary level focus on Catholic social teaching?
- Do instructional materials and resources contain elements of Catholic social teaching?
- Has the faculty received training on integrating CST into the various disciplines?
- Do lesson plans and learning activities reflect a treatment of CST?
- Are service projects aligned to elements of the Church's social teaching?
- Are reflections geared towards meaningful thought about the impact of CST?
- Can students and faculty articulate how service is integral to being Catholic?

Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

2.7: *The theory and practice of the Church's social teachings are essential elements of the curriculum.*

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

At level 3- Fully Meets Benchmark,

Catholic Social teachings are evident through the school's instruction and practice. Students are asked to make connections between their learning and CST.

At level 4-Exceeds Benchmark,

the Church's social teachings will be infused into multiple subject areas including religious education. Students are involved in forms of service that flow from Catholic social teaching. Students are able to express why service is important in relation to CST. Students and faculty demonstrate a fluency with CST. Students are able to see and experience natural connections between Eucharist, coursework and service.

At level 2-Partially Meets Benchmark,

the Church's social teachings are not consciously infused into the curriculum or instruction but may be addressed less systematically from time to time or from teacher to teacher.

At level 1-Does Not Meet Benchmark,

the theory and practice of the Church's social teaching are not addressed in the curriculum or service projects.

Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

2.7: The theory and practice of the Church's social teachings are essential elements of the curriculum.

IV. What are some key suggestions for improvement?

To move from level 1 to level 2,

- Review the school's mission statement. How is the school's mission connected to the Church's social teaching? How is the school's understanding of the Eucharist connected to CST?
- Review the theory and practice of the Church's social teaching.
- Integrate CST into existing curriculum in an extended discussion with the faculty.
- Insert the Church's social teaching into a class or subject area where it is most relevant.

To move from level 2 to level 3,

- Integrate the theory and practice of the Church's social teaching into the curriculum.
- Structure the CST instructional program to assure that every student is involved.
- Assess what students are gaining from the service projects and adjust these projects so they are more intimately linked to the students' understanding of Eucharist.

To move from level 3 to 4,

- Create and implement a plan to integrate Catholic social teaching into multiple subject areas, including religion.
- Design service projects around themes derived from CST.
- Reflect on the effectiveness of the service undertaken in this regard in the light of being a community centered on the Eucharist.
- Empower students to direct a process of reflection on their service experiences.
- Communicate the results of this process to the community.

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