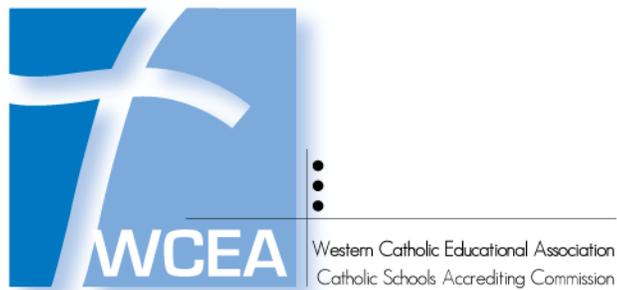


REPORT OF FINDINGS

SAINT MARY'S SCHOOL
224 7TH ST NW
ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO
(ARCH)DIOCESE OF SANTA FE



IMPROVING STUDENT LEARNING 2012

**A SELF STUDY PROCESS
FOR CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS**

FEBRUARY 17-19, 2016

REPORT OF FINDINGS

For

Saint Mary's School

Chairperson- Dr. Steve Morissette
Archdiocese of Seattle
St. Philomena School
1815 S 220th St
Des Moines, WA 98198
206.824.4051

Team Member- Mary Catherine Keating
Queen of Heaven- Albuquerque

Team Member- Paula Domino DeHaas
Our Lady of Fatima- Albuquerque

Team Member- Melanie Chavez
Saint Mary's School- Belen

Team Member- Nikki Stinett
Queen of Heaven - Albuquerque

Team Member- Mary Giglio
St. Therese- Albuquerque

PREFACE

We, the Visiting Committee, wish to commend you, the pastor, administration, faculty, staff, parents, and student body of Saint Mary's School for working together to make the school a loving, caring and learning environment. We pray that the good work that you have done and the plans that you have made for the future will help you become an even better school.

The team found our three days at Saint Mary's School professionally rich and personally rewarding. We experienced a community where everyone is striving to provide a Catholic environment where quality education is a priority.

We wish to thank all of you, pastor, principal, faculty, staff, parents and students for your warm and gracious hospitality.

May the Christ we serve bless you with every success as you journey into your future.

Chapter 1: Introduction

A. How the Self Study was Conducted

The Visiting Committee observed that Saint Mary's School was highly effective in completing and compiling the data for the Self-Study. The Saint Mary's Self Study process began in September of 2014 when the team was introduced to the Western Catholic Education Association and the Accreditation process. A timeline was developed, overseen by the leadership team and adjusted as necessary. Parent input was incorporated upon invitation where appropriate and the School Consultative Council was informed of progress at appropriate times throughout the process. In October and November 2014, the Accreditation Team began initial discussions to determine how to disseminate and implement the Self Study process. In January 2015, the Archdiocese provided a formal workshop instructed by WCEA. During Saint Mary's monthly staff meeting in January, faculty members voluntarily signed up in section committees to participate in discussions and the initial writings. Findings of these committees were recorded and electronically transmitted to the Accreditation Team. In February 2015, the faculty met to review the other committees' findings. All staff members were invited to attend and participate in these meetings. From March through May 2015, the faculty proceeded to write Chapter 3. The Accreditation Team met in May and June 2015 to continue the writing process of the rest of the Self Study rough draft. In August and September 2015, the rough draft was presented to the shareholders and reviewed. In November 2015, the rough draft was finalized in preparation for submission to WCEA. The final copy was published in January 2016.

The main obstacles to the completion of the Self Study was insufficient time based on the initial team structure. The structure was revised and sub-committees were formed to allow for more frequent meeting time and draft reports were posted on One Drive allowing wider access to draft documents. In discussion with the Leadership team, the Visiting Committee learned that an

additional obstacle was the hiring of new staff over the past two years, 16 new faculty in all. While these were obstacles, they did not impede the process of writing the self-study.

B. Involvement and Collaboration of Shareholders in Completing the Self Study

Accreditation Factor #1: *The school involves all shareholders in data review, analysis and dialogue about perceived accomplishments in the area of student learning, and in developing, implementing and monitoring goals for improvements in student learning.*

The Visiting Committee observed that Saint Mary's School was highly effective in involving all shareholders in completing the Self Study. All of the school staff and the Immaculate Conception priests were involved in the self-study process. Key shareholders were asked to provide input specific to their expertise and role in the school. The Pastor and Consultative Council were given appropriate information by the administration and their input is included throughout the self-study.

Saint Mary's believes that they have an ongoing effective plan for keeping shareholders involved in the analysis of the school's effectiveness. There are working relationships between academic goal teams, the Accreditation Team and administration. Information is disseminated to the Consultative Council as well as families through Sycamore.

It was noted from the Visiting Committee in meeting with the Leadership Team that the mission statement of the school went through a lengthy process that included Pastor, faculty and parent input. After thorough assimilation, the faculty decided not to make any revisions to the mission statement until the accreditation process was over so they could give the revisions their full attention.

It was communicated to the Visiting Committee through discussion with parents that they were informed of the process and procedures for the Self Study, including receiving information through newsletters, Consultative Council meetings and communication from the principal. The document was published and accessible to all shareholders.

Chapter 2: Context of the School

A. School Profile

The Visiting Committee has observed that Saint Mary's School has been highly effective in compiling and analyzing annually updated data (cultural, demographic, financial, survey, interview), and identified major changes or trends. This is Saint Mary's first time going through the WCEA accreditation process so there was no comparison data. Saint Mary's Catholic School was opened in September 1893, by the Sisters of Charity from Cincinnati, Ohio and the Jesuit Fathers from Immaculate Conception Parish. Sister Mary Silva, S.C., added a complete high school, graduating its first class in 1925. Saint Mary's High School graduated its last class in 1967. Today, Saint Mary's serves approximately 400 students from preschool to eighth grade. Many of the current students come from alumni. These families have attended Saint Mary's for generations. The school has a faculty of approximately fifty-five teachers. Mrs. Carissa Cantrell is the Saint Mary's Catholic School Principal. Father Warren Broussard, S. J. is the pastor of the parish, Immaculate Conception. In 2012 the school's principal, a Sister of Charity, retired. Currently, the school has no religious sisters on faculty or staff. However, the Jesuit priests remain active at the school and can often be seen on campus.

The school is uniquely located in the heart of downtown Albuquerque. This location gives Saint Mary's the opportunity to educate many of the children whose parents are employed in the downtown area. However, this location also challenges the school to build community as it is not a neighborhood school. Beginning in 2009, Saint Mary's saw the start of what became a steady downward trend in enrollment due to the recession. The school has noticed that the increase in charter schools and reopening of area public schools has also impacted enrollment. There has been an increase in lower income housing in the area that included families that could not afford tuition. The school's parish, Immaculate Conception, has a high population of parishioners fifty years and older. The parish is considered to be at poverty level by the Archdiocese.

Recognizing that it is not a neighborhood school, Saint Mary's began to develop a marketing plan to include the surrounding community. The surrounding area includes professional businesses and apartments; it is not primarily a family/residential area. In response to this, Saint Mary's hired a development director as part of the marketing plan. The development director was beginning to put the following into place: creating a data base to include alumni and donors, beginning to apply for grants, creating an incentive plan for families who currently attend Saint Mary's to bring in new families, initiating a direct mail campaign, purchased the United States census data to target households with families outside the immediate area to include Tijeras, Belen, Bernalillo, Sandia Pueblo and Cedar Crest, establishing a recruitment committee to include parents and teachers who would visit daycares and parishes that do not have schools, hosting open houses for community members and potential families, looking at military relocations to increase enrollment, and targeting local businesses for donations and potential families. Unfortunately, the Development Director resigned in February 2016.

Another trend that has impacted Saint Mary is an increase of students who have special needs and/or qualify for special education. In response to this, Saint Mary's has hired not only a full-time counselor, but also a full-time resource teacher. Saint Mary's has been using the Iowa Test

of Basic Skills (ITBS) data to determine student growth and has seen inconsistent progress. Due to the inconsistencies, Saint Mary's initiated the use of short cycle assessments because they gave more immediate, consistent and accurate feedback to build student profiles. The short cycle assessments also allow teachers to better develop curriculum and identify students who need interventions. Saint Mary's began to use quartiles as of the 2014-2015 school year and saw a steady progression of students from one quartile to the next.

In November of 2014, an on-line parent survey was made available to all Saint Mary's School families. Since the return of this survey was less than 5%, it was decided the data was insufficient. In 2015, a new parent survey was given during the October parent-teacher conferences. The percentage of participation increased to 28%. Parents rated all curricular subjects to be 74% or above, effective or highly effective. Over 88% of the parents feel that teachers are easily accessible, are comfortable in discussing a problem, and are provided with adequate feedback. 95% of parents responded that they received sufficient communication from both the Sunday Update and the Cougar Correspondent.

In 2014, the students participated in an on-line survey. The K-3 student survey indicated that the students were highly satisfied in all areas. They did, however, express a desire to have more choices in what they learn. In the 4-8 student surveys, the majority of students agreed or strongly agreed to all responses with the exception of one. The response in question was in reference to how students treat others who are different. The number of students that strongly disagreed with this question raised concerns. The Visiting Committee was informed in discussion with the principal that the Middle School teachers addressed this concern by holding class meetings, discussing the issues with the students, and holding grade wide meeting to address this concern and come up with steps and an action plan.

The responses to the Teacher Statements category showed that the majority of students were satisfied with their teachers. The students responded that they work well in a variety of learning environments. The final category asked students about how their time was spent within the classroom. The responses indicated that working in groups and using computers was where the least amount of time was spent.

Teachers feel very strongly that they provide a welcoming classroom environment and contribute to the good reputation of the school. The staff feels the need for access to technology in order to more effectively prepare the students for high school and beyond.

Through discussions with the faculty, students and parents and through our observations at Saint Mary's School, the Visiting Committee can reiterate that the faculty, student, and parent community are very satisfied with the overall education that is being provided at Saint Mary's School.

B. Use of Prior Accreditation Findings to Support High Achievement of All Students

Accreditation Factor #2: *The school has used the prior accreditation findings, both those discovered by the school and those identified by the Visiting Committee, and other pertinent data to ensure high achievement of all students and to drive school improvement.*

The Visiting Committee observed that this is Saint Mary's first time through the WCEA accreditation process and therefore did not have the comparison data to complete the use of prior accreditation findings.

Chapter 3: Quality of the School Program

A. Assessment of the School's Catholic Identity

Accreditation Factor #3: *The school is Catholic, approved by the Local Ordinary (Canon 803), providing opportunities for community worship and participation in the Sacraments, and promoting evangelization and service to the community.*

The Visiting Committee has observed that Saint Mary's School has been highly effective in assessing its Catholic Identity. During the Self-Study process, the school addressed each of the Catholic Identity Standards. The Catholic Identity at Saint Mary's is at the heart of learning and development.

The school's mission and philosophy reflect the integration of faith into all aspects of school life. The mission and values are predominantly displayed in the front office, in every classroom, at the top of the school's signature page, website and Sycamore page. Regular opportunities are provided for the school community to experience prayer and the reception of the sacraments. A variety of opportunities are provided for students to experience some of the more traditional forms of prayer. The entire school community has the opportunity to attend Wednesday Mass. Each homeroom signs up to plan and host Mass for the school. Mass themes focus on the liturgical cycle of the Church year and highlight feast days. A well-developed and comprehensive program for service outreach to the Church and civic community is in place. The students and faculty provide service because it is a hallmark of the Catholic faith and not due to requirements.

Saint Mary's adheres to the Archdiocese of Santa Fe Religion Curriculum Guidelines as the basis of their religious education instructional program. The Archdiocesan curriculum clearly states what students should know, understand and be able to do at each grade level. The Religion textbooks are in compliance with the Catechism of the Catholic Church and are approved for use within the diocese by the Local Ordinary. Through classroom observations and discussions with the students, the Visiting Committee observed that religion classes are an integral part of the education for Saint Mary's School.

The formation of teachers for catechetical and instructional competence is on-going and all teachers are either certified or in the process of being certified according to the Archdiocese of Santa Fe requirements.

Based on survey input, and through the reflection and discussion on this section of the Self Study, the school has discovered the areas of Catholic Identity where improvement is needed. These include: that the school provide more opportunities for parents to participate in ongoing

catechesis formation and that the school develop a way to positively evaluate a student's spiritual growth.

The Visiting Committee noted in discussions with the Pastor that he believes the school does an excellent job with its overall Catholic Identity. He stated that the students know they are Catholic and have knowledge beyond everyday catechism. They have a solid understanding of their faith and service. This sentiment was reiterated by the parents, Consultative Council and faculty. The Pastor additionally stated the need for ongoing catechesis formation to help parents claim their faith.

B. Defining the School's Purpose

Accreditation Factor #4: *The school's purpose is defined through the school's mission statement, philosophy, measurable Schoolwide Learning Expectations, Arch/diocesan curriculum standards (local curriculum standards where Arch/diocesan standards don't exist), and other governing authority expectations.*

The Visiting Committee has observed that Saint Mary's School has been effective in that the school's mission and philosophy do reflect the Catholic Identity of the school. The school aligned with the documents set forth with USCCB *To Teach as Jesus Did* and *Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary & Secondary Schools in the Third Millennium*. The focus of the mission is to embrace the Gospel message and to make a difference in the world through Catholic education. The school's mission and philosophy are integrated within the school. The philosophy of Saint Mary's clearly recognizes that God is the center of the school, and that everything the school does is centered on the mission of the Church.

Written curriculum standards help to define the school's purpose. Saint Mary's curriculum follows the standards provided by the Archdiocese. The standards are posted on Sycamore and the Archdiocesan website. Teachers are required to note specific standards addressed in weekly lesson plans, which are reviewed by the administration.

It was noted from the Visiting Committee in meeting with the Leadership Team that the mission statement of the school went through a lengthy process that included Pastor, faculty and parent input. After thorough assimilation, the faculty decided not to make any revisions to the mission statement until the accreditation process was over so they could give the revisions their full attention. The mission and the purpose were communicated with all shareholders, as disclosed by the leadership team.

The Self Study stated that the governing authority has high expectations for the school; they oversee the spiritual growth of all students and foster in them a love for God and service for others. The principal meets regularly with the pastor to discuss school budget, enrollment, curriculum, and spiritual, as well as, educational growth of the students. The principal provides regular reports to the Consultative Council. The Consultative Council advises the pastor and principal in regards to issues of facility maintenance, budget, enrollment, technology, marketing and development, and strategic planning.

St. Mary's stated in their Self Study document that one of their goals was to monitor progress toward SLE's and make sure SLE's are aligned with the school's mission and philosophy. In the initial reading of the Self Study document, the Visiting Committee noted the lack of presence and clarity of SLE's. The Visiting Committee observed the absence of posted SLE's, the students' unawareness of them and the faculty's misunderstanding of a SLE. In discussion with the leadership team, the Visiting Committee discovered that the leadership team felt the absence of SLE's was due to the training they received which lacked the clarity needed to develop appropriate SLE's in accordance with the WCEA guidelines. The Visiting Committee has communicated to the leadership team the importance of SLE's and will make the recommendation of an action plan goal related to the SLE's.

C. Organization for Student Learning to Support High Achievement of All Students

Accreditation Factor #5: *The organizational structures of the school focus on high achievement of all students, and communicate student progress to all shareholders.*

The Visiting Committee has observed that Saint Mary's School has been effective in their organizational structures that focus on high achievement for all students. Saint Mary's promotes the school's Catholic Identity. The Pastor, administration and staff ensure the sacraments, religious instruction and practices, are aligned with church doctrine and dogma. Each homeroom has a dedicated religion class; however, religion is integrated into all areas of the curriculum. The school participates in a weekly school community Mass. The school provides opportunities for reconciliation during Advent, Lent, and upon student request. Saint Mary's students and families are invited to participate in all prayer experiences throughout the year. The school budgets for all of the above programs in addition to catechesis pamphlets for Advent, Lent, Catholic Schools Week, and the Sacraments. There are both formal and informal visits from the parish priests. There is formal prayer at the beginning and end of the school day, and other opportunities for prayer throughout the school day. In keeping with the school-wide mission statement, all stakeholders strive to model behavior that is in line with Catholic teachings.

Saint Mary's environment supports high achievement of all students. The school's mission statement encourages excellence from students and the school community. The staff serves as role models and witnesses in living Catholic values and lifestyles. The staff manifests a Catholic and Christ-centered mission working collaboratively with one another. The school has a Student Assistant Team that meets regularly to discuss, strategize, and if needed pursue diagnostic testing to meet the needs of students both below and above grade level. The mid-school's math, literature, and social studies classes are leveled, based on reading and math ability, to better meet academic needs. The school's Reading, Catholic Identity and Math committees focus on curriculum, instructional strategies, interventions and assessments to identify, support, and meet academic goals. High achievement by all learners is encouraged through public recognition and feedback. At Mass, character and service are recognized through the Cougar Paw program. The Archdiocese recognizes Distinguished Disciples from each school. The mid-school hosts

quarterly honor assemblies that recognize student academic success. The elementary and mid-school also hold semester/end of the year subject awards.

Saint Mary's is focused on student learning and communicating student achievement to all shareholders. Survey results of faculty and students validate the methods used for communication. School-wide student success is shared via the Cougar Corresponder. Within classrooms, teachers give constant and immediate feedback to the student. Sycamore School Management allows the administration and teachers to monitor and communicate student progress to the students and parents. Examples of communication of the student's progress includes: quarterly report cards, parent conferences, phone calls, progress reports/folders, and the students themselves. Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled twice a year. Teachers are available throughout the year for additional conferences.

The Consultative Council and the Pastor are informed of the student learning needs and help support the school community by analyzing budgetary concerns and collaborating with the administration on how best to meet those needs. The Pastor dialogues with the school principal at the monthly parish staff meetings. The school also has a representative on the Pastoral Council.

The Saint Mary's Self Study has documented the need for a strategic plan for future viability. The Visiting Committee supports the school's recommendation for the need of a strategic plan to ensure that avenues are in place to support the high achievement of all Saint Mary students, this plan is to include input from all invested shareholders.

D. Data Analysis and Action to Support High Achievement of All Students

Accreditation Factor #6: *The school uses educationally sound assessment processes to collect data. The school disaggregates and analyzes student performance data and uses the analysis as a basis for instructional/curricular improvement.*

The Visiting Committee has observed that Saint Mary's School effectively uses educationally sound assessment processes to collect data. The school's Catholic Identity Committee has identified faith formation and religious curriculum as its primary purpose. The ACRE test is given at the fifth and eighth grade levels. The test measures accumulated knowledge of Catholic doctrine and traditions. The data collected helps the school to identify and implement new Catholic identity programs and religion curriculum goals. Classroom survey data is collected and analyzed to improve religious experiences for the next year. Saint Mary's utilizes tests provided by Loyola Press to measure student progress in meeting Archdiocesan Religion Standards. Test data is measured by student performance on the religion pretest, mid-year test and posttest. In order to track individual growth, students are placed into quartiles. Unit tests are given and analyzed at the classroom level at regular intervals to drive religion instruction and to monitor learning of concepts. Saint Mary's recognizes the difficulty in collecting data on spiritual growth.

All school-wide data is collected across all grade levels in Math, Reading, and Religion to support the school's goals. Through the spring of 2015 students in grades three through eight took the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), a nationally norm-referenced test. This test measured

knowledge in reading, language arts, math, social studies, science sources of information, and maps and diagrams. The data collected helped the school to determine the needs of the students. As of fall 2016, STAR 360 has replaced the ITBS test for math and reading.

All data is disaggregated and analyzed for curricular and instructional improvement. Individual classrooms record student test scores on OneDrive. Each test question addresses a specific concept. The number of students who correctly answered each question is tabulated. The classroom scores are put into grade level Consolidated Reports on OneDrive. Grade-level teams then meet to determine specific strengths and weaknesses. The teams develop strategic improvement action plans. The students' scores are then broken into quartiles to determine if students are closing instructional gaps. Data is disaggregated by quartiles. These quartiles allow teachers to identify and address all learning levels. The use of quartiles gives the teacher and school a visual picture of those students in need of intervention or enrichment of a specific concept and/or extra services (SAT, Title I, Speech Therapy). The school has a Student Assistant Team that meets regularly to discuss, strategize, and if needed pursue diagnostic testing to meet the needs of students both below and above grade level.

The school uses multiple assessments that measure acceptable student progress. Math, reading and religion benchmark tests are administered in August, January and May. These tests are used to monitor student progress throughout the year. Team and classroom sheets are developed once data has been collected. Teachers use team and classroom data analysis sheets to monitor how individual students, classes and grade levels perform on the benchmarks. Planning is adjusted to meet the needs of students. Data analysis includes interventions to address areas of weakness.

The use of data disaggregation and analysis has helped the school to improve instruction and curriculum. This is done within the goal teams. Strategies for student improvement are researched, discussed and enacted. Disaggregation of the data has led to professional development workshops, which included formative assessments and differentiated learning strategies. Students, in many of the grade levels, keep data folders in order to monitor progress toward meeting personal academic goals. Students are expected to analyze the data to determine strengths and opportunities for improvement. They create action plans for learning.

The Visiting Committee acknowledges that Saint Mary's School effectively uses data to measure their Catholic Identity and in relationship with student performance. We applaud them for their efforts with student data folders, with the work of the SAT team, and with the grade level teams. We, however, feel that more time and efforts need to be devoted to using of data to drive curricular improvement.

E. High Achievement By All Students Toward Clearly Defined SLEs and Curriculum Standards

Accreditation Factor #7: *All students make acceptable and measurable progress toward clearly defined Schoolwide Learning Expectations and challenging, comprehensive, and relevant curriculum standards.*

The Visiting Committee has observed that Saint Mary's School is effective in ensuring that all students make acceptable and measurable progress toward clearly defined Schoolwide Learning Expectations and challenging, comprehensive, and relevant curriculum standards. Catholic teachings are infused into every aspect of the curriculum. All content areas uphold the teachings of Jesus and the Church. Throughout the day students are taught the importance of living the Gospel message, the value of honesty, Church history, and the respect for people of all faiths. The school follows the curriculum set forth by the Archdiocese of Santa Fe. The current religion curriculum was implemented in August 2013.

Curriculum standards are challenging and create a continuum of learning for all students. As a result, the continuum of learning flows from pre-k through eighth grade. Standards of the Archdiocese are continuously updated to ensure they are relevant to the learning needs of students. The school acknowledges the growth of individual students based on individual needs. For example, students track progress in many classes through the use of data folders, allowing for ownership of learning. Long range curriculum goal plans are in place to ensure the continuity of learning for all students. Saint Mary's has set school-wide goals for math, reading and religion curriculum. With these goals, teachers are able to create long range plans to address the concepts. Teachers use curriculum guides and scope and sequence maps that accompany text books to develop long range plans.

As previously stated in the Report of Findings, St. Mary's stated in their Self Study document that one of their goals was to monitor progress toward SLE's and make sure SLE's are aligned with the school's mission and philosophy. In the initial reading of the Self Study document, the Visiting Committee noted the lack of presence and clarity of SLE's. The Visiting Committee observed the absence of posted SLE's, the students' unawareness of them and the faculty's misunderstanding of a SLE. In discussion with the leadership team, the Visiting Committee discovered that the leadership team felt the absence of SLE's was due to the training they received which lacked the clarity needed to develop appropriate SLE's in accordance with the WCEA guidelines. The Visiting Committee has communicated to the leadership team the importance of SLE's and will make the recommendation of an action plan goal related to the SLE's.

The school uses multiple assessments that measure acceptable progress towards curriculum standards. Math, reading and religion benchmark tests are administered in August, January and May. These tests are used to monitor student progress throughout the year.

Technology is being integrated into the learning process. Almost all classrooms have had Promethean Boards installed and there is a plan to install more so every classroom has one. Lessons are designed to allow the boards to be interactive in student learning. Students have access to two computer labs, where they create presentations. The mid-school has allowed students to bring personal electronic devices to use in the classrooms when appropriate. Technology is an area that the school is working to enhance. There is a technology plan in place. The vision of this plan includes continuous upgrade of computers, a technology budget, tablets, Promethean Boards, and wireless internet. The Technology Committee, a subcommittee of the Consultative Council, meets monthly to review and assist the implementation of the technology plan.

Additionally, Saint Mary's teachers integrate technology into the teaching and learning process. The ideal is to have full access to computer technology in all classrooms. This allows students to be involved in hands-on work including researching, problem-solving, blogging, communicating, moviemaking, and writing. In some classrooms, technology has provided many ways to differentiate instruction and to stimulate student interest allowing global accessibility.

The Visiting Committee recognizes that the need for additional technology is important to both the students and the parents as this was echoed through our meetings with both of these groups.

The school identifies students who are not making progress. Through the use of data analysis and quartile forms, teachers are easily able to identify those students who are not making progress. The school has been working to update intervention strategies that are grade level appropriate to better serve these students. Parents are involved in the decision making process in regards to interventions and next steps towards student progress. The school's resource teacher is available to work on additional interventions with individual or small groups of students. The resource teacher also does classroom observations to offer advice on how to address individual student needs. The school designs, monitors, and assesses plans to assist these students in making progress through the school's Student Assistant Team (SAT). The SAT team helps to ensure that students who struggle are having their classroom needs met. The team coordinates parent involvement, resource teacher services, Title I services (when eligible), and any testing through APS.

The Visiting Committee would also like to applaud the efforts that were taken to help students with various learning needs which include the hiring of the resource teacher. We believe she is a valuable asset to the school.

F. Instructional Methodology to Support High Achievement of All Students

Accreditation Factor #8: *The staff applies research-based knowledge about teaching and learning in the instructional process. Assessment is frequent and varied, integrated into the teaching/learning process, and informs curriculum planning.*

The Visiting Committee has observed that Saint Mary's School is effective in applying research-based knowledge about teaching and learning in the instructional process; assessment is frequent and varied, integrated into the teaching/learning process, and informs curriculum planning.

The faculty is fully committed to the mission of the Catholic school. The entire staff models Catholic values and teachers fulfill their role as apostolic and ministerial workers of the Roman Catholic Church. The school works to create a strong faith community. Staff brings the gospel values into daily education through classroom management strategies and discipline policies, connected with the gospel value of love and respect. Staff serves as Eucharistic ministers at weekly Mass.

The modeling of the Catholic values were often and regularly observed by the Visiting Committee during our accreditation visit.

Instructional methodology is linked to curriculum standards. Various learning strategies and best practices are used to create engaging and rigorous learning experiences for students. Teachers are empowered to design and implement lessons. In-house professional development is provided in regards to social behavior, academics, and religion curriculum on early dismissal days. All development includes research based evidence, knowledge, and practices.

The Visiting Committee feels that the Self Study is incomplete in listing the various research-based methodologies that are employed by the teachers in their classrooms. Through our observations we noticed the following methodologies: co-operative learning, circulating, small group instruction, one-on-one instruction, various forms of formative assessments: including small white boards, thumbs up, think-pair-share, exit slips, peer review and feedback; giving instructions, directions, coaching, modeling, problem based learning, presenting, guided practice, hands-on activities, learning centers, text based question and answers, and assessing formally.

Saint Mary's teachers integrate technology into the teaching and learning process. The ideal is to have full access to computer technology in all classrooms. This allows students to be involved in hands-on work including researching, problem-solving, blogging, communicating, moviemaking, and writing. In some classrooms, technology has provided many ways to differentiate instruction and to stimulate student interest allowing global accessibility.

A comprehensive school improvement plan has been established to improve student learning. This plan is based on an analysis of a variety of assessments and various instructional methodologies. Team and classroom data analysis forms provide evidence that Saint Mary's has established known effective, research-based methods and strategies for student learning. The school has established measurable goals and benchmarks for student performance that are tied to state and archdiocesan competencies. The school continues to work on aligning professional development with the school's self-study.

G. Support for Student Spiritual, Personal, and Academic Growth

Accreditation Factor #9: *Within the school's community of faith, students have opportunities to participate in support services and activities to assist them in accessing the curricular and co-curricular programs to achieve the Schoolwide Learning Expectations, Arch/diocesan curriculum standards (local curriculum standards where Arch/diocesan standards don't exist), and other governing authority expectations.*

The Visiting Committee has observed that Saint Mary's School is highly effective in supporting student spiritual, personal, and academic growth. The students' faith formation is a primary goal of Saint Mary's. Rooted in Catholic tradition, Saint Mary's incorporates prayer, liturgies, religious education, and service into all aspects of school life. Teachers, students, and/or parents assist in planning and participation in liturgies and prayer services. Students are encouraged to volunteer and participate in service projects for the parish and community. The Gospel message, to make a difference in the world through Christian service and leadership, is evident in programs like Ignatian Spirituality Week, the Christmas pageant, and the Roadrunner Food Bank service project. There are collections for Saint Vincent de Paul, Catholic Relief Services, and the Bread and Blessing parish program.

In discussion with the students, the Visiting Committee learned that the students also participate in the Bread and Blessing project, the Rice Bowl, and various other projects and activities through the Student Campus Ministry program.

Teachers modify assignments or assessments for students with a higher learning aptitude. The school uses Title II funds for professional development opportunities that enhance differentiated instruction. The middle school Literature, Math and Social Studies classes are leveled in order to reach various learning styles and needs.

The school's emergency plans provide safety for all members of the school community. The Crisis Management Team meets quarterly throughout the year to address school safety concerns. The team has collaborated with different law enforcement agencies to help monitor and implement plans for different scenarios, (fire drills, lockdowns, and natural disasters).

Students who need academic assistance are supported by the classroom teacher, school resource teacher, speech therapist, Student Assistance Team and Title I teacher. Progress reports are used to help identify students in need of academic assistance and monitor modifications and interventions that have been put in place. Students with behavioral concerns may need guidance in making appropriate choices and are afforded the opportunity to speak with the teacher, school counselor, administrator and/or priest. Student success relies on the cooperation and honest communication of all involved. The school strives to provide a nurturing environment for all students. Services are available for students who have undergone or are undergoing mental stress. Saint Mary's School has a guidance and counseling program. The counselor provides individual and small group counseling, and classroom guidance presentations. The school counselor is available to assist students in meeting academic, spiritual and emotional needs.

H. Resource Management and Development to Support High Achievement of All Students

Accreditation Factor #10: *The pastor, principal, and school board develop, implement, and monitor resources and plans to ensure and support high achievement of all students of the Schoolwide Learning Expectations, Arch/diocesan curriculum standards (local curriculum standards where Arch/diocesan standards don't exist), and other governing authority expectations.*

The Visiting Committee observed that Saint Mary's School has been highly effective in the using its financial resources to support Catholic Identity at Saint Mary's School. It is noted that Saint Mary's School recognizes that it is critical to manage the income in order to support the curricular programming, which in turn, supports the teaching and learning at Saint Mary's School. In regards to supporting the school's Catholic identity, resources purchased and utilized include websites, such as Loyola Press, Saint Mary's Press, The Catechist, NCEA, and USCCB. These sites are utilized for prayer resources for faculty and student retreats, special Church seasons, videos, webinars, and classroom lessons. The Catholic Schools Office sponsors two mandatory teacher workshop days each year. Keynote speakers and breakout sessions are typically aligned to catechist formation. In addition, teachers must hold at least a basic certificate for catechist formation. The librarian has begun to order Catholic specific fiction and non-fiction for teacher and student use. The goal is to create a space for spiritual enrichment as well as to build resources for students to use on religious reports or projects. School expenditures are accounted for as specific line items in the budget for Catholic resources and classes.

The Visiting Committee observed that Saint Mary's School has been highly effective in developing, implementing, and monitoring a financial management system for the school. Each month, financial reports are reviewed by the Pastor, Principal, Business Manager, CPA, and the school finance committee. The Parish Finance Council reviews the budget quarterly. Saint Mary's follows all financial policies as prescribed in the Archdiocesan Policy Handbook. With the expertise on the committee and council, a budget is prepared, monitored, and discussed monthly. Because of transparency, administration has found council members to have taken ownership and truly understand the strengths and weaknesses of the financial resources.

The Visiting Committee observed that Saint Mary's School has been highly effective reporting its fiscal status to its shareholders. In the last three years, the Principal has shared finances with all shareholders at the beginning of the year meeting and in a state of the school newsletter in May. As required by the Archdiocese, the school's finances and procedures are audited every three years. It has been the school's position to have open and honest communication about the state of finances.

The Visiting Committee observed that Saint Mary's School has been effective in planning for its long-term viability. Historically, Saint Mary's School has not developed a comprehensive financial or strategic plan. The Consultative Council is addressing a strategic plan and has finished a SLOT (Strengths, Limitations, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis to conclude the 2014-2015 school year. The budget deficit has been significantly reduced over the last three years by managing staffing levels, decreasing expenditures, and increasing the collection of tuition. A Development Director has been hired to explore fundraising opportunities, manage donations, and tap into the alumni database, however, he resigned in mid-February 2016. In discussion with the principal, in regarding this resignation, there are plans in place for the upcoming school year to replace the duties of the Development Director. The Pastor also verified the need to engage the alumni and further build more endowment for the school.

It is also noted from the Visiting Committee's meeting with the Pastor that he is pleased with the principal's diligent work on the budget reduction, including the collection of past tuition. He

believes the school is in on a much more solid footing in regards to finances. The Pastor stated that he will thoroughly support a comprehensive strategic plan to the best of his abilities.

Appropriate planning is critical to the longevity of Saint Mary's School. Attracting and retaining highly qualified teachers is critical to the school's success. This relates directly to proper fiscal management as staff and teachers are given tools and curricular resources which includes technology. This encourages the teachers to plan creative, engaging, and dynamic lessons to increase student achievement at all levels.

The Visiting Committee has observed that Saint Mary's School has been highly effective in planning for technology implementation. In the spring semester of 2014, Saint Mary's School hired a consultant to apply for E-Rate. For the first time, the school will utilize E-Rate to install wireless capabilities throughout the campus. The plan is to begin this project during the summer of 2016. First steps include upgrading the infrastructure, hiring a technology coordinator, and addressing any cable issues. With wireless capabilities, students will be able to utilize tablets, smartphones, I-PADS, and other devices which research shows, enhances student learning. It is important to note that the Technology Coordinator will play a key role as a resource for all shareholders.

The Visiting Committee has observed that Saint Mary's School has been highly effective in analyzing their financial position to determine the most effective way to exercise financial stewardship to ensure the financial viability of the school. Saint Mary's School has decreased the deficit over the course of three years by closely managing all resources and the administration will continue to be transparent and use the experts on the committees to strategize each month to work to make this happen. The school acknowledges the need for a strategic plan and the responsibility of submitting the plan it to the Catholic Schools Office. This will be an important resource for future goals and planning. Additionally, in consultation with Pastor, Superintendent, committee, and council, the administration continues to make necessary staffing changes to positively impact the budget. Saint Mary's School has made a concerted effort to increase technology in the classrooms to increase learning and improve teaching methodology.

The Visiting Committee supports the school's recommendation for the need of a strategic plan that addresses the financial viability of the school to ensure that avenues are in place to support the high achievement of all Saint Mary students.

Chapter 4: The Action Plan

A. Design and Alignment of the Action Plan with the Self Study Findings

Accreditation Factor #11 (The Action Plan addresses the school's critical goals to enhance student learning that supports high achievement of all students of the Schoolwide Learning Expectations, Arch/diocesan curriculum standards (local curriculum standards where Arch/diocesan standards don't exist), and other institutional and/or governing authority expectations.)

Schoolwide Lists of Significant Accomplishments and Critical Goals

Schoolwide Significant Accomplishments (the eight most significant determined by the VC)

1. The school provides many opportunities for students and parents to participate in prayer and for the students to serve the community.
2. The school follows a strong Religion Curriculum that is integrated into all other subjects and curriculum and integrates Catholic values into the mission and philosophy statements.
3. The Student Assistant Team has been able to identify students that require additional learning support.
4. The school has a well-established process for collecting short cycle and summative data, including the implementation of quartiles to allow the school to identify individual student learning needs.
5. There is a full time counselor and resource teacher to assist students and staff members.
6. Information (grades, assignments, and current happenings) is available for parents on Sycamore classroom web pages.
7. The vision of the Technology Plan has allowed the introduction of interactive whiteboards in the classrooms.
8. The school has decreased the deficit by decreasing expenditures and increasing collection of tuition.

Critical Goals (identified by school)

1. To actively live the Gospel message
2. Provide time for professional development and collaboration for teachers in data analysis in reading and math
3. Focus on best teaching practices and integration of technology to engage students not only in the lower quartiles, but also in the upper quartiles, to improve high achievement of all learners
4. n/a
5. n/a

The Visiting Committee observed that Saint Mary's School has been effective in identifying critical goals that are focused on improving student learning. Saint Mary's School has identified three critical goals in their Self Study. The Visiting Committee believes that goal number two and three are attainable, measurable and reflect the findings of the overall Self Study. The Visiting Committee feels that goal number one, while important, is not their top critical goal. We perceive the Catholic Identity to be highly effective and understand there are areas where improvement is desired particularly in parent faith formation. The Visiting Committee believes that a critical goal related to the establishment of SLE's be the school top critical goal and is addressed in Option B of this document.

The Visiting Committee observed that Saint Mary's School has been effective in the Action Plan alignment that addresses the school's critical goals in order to support high achievement of all students. Their Action Plan reflects the self-identified findings that Saint Mary's School believes will support student achievement. The Visiting Committee also recognizes that there are specific strategies and activities that are well identified with a solid plan for implementation. Saint Mary's School has established which specific assessments are designed to monitor growth in student learning.

OPTION A: *Modification of a critical goal:*

n/a

OPTION B: *Critical Goal Identified by the Visiting Committee:*

Goal: To develop measurable SLE's that are aligned with the WCEA protocol (statements of what a student should know, understand, value, and be able to do by graduation).

St. Mary's stated in their Self Study document that one of their priorities was to monitor progress toward SLE's and make sure SLE's are aligned with the school's mission and philosophy. In the initial reading of the Self Study document, the Visiting Committee noted the lack of presence and clarity of SLE's. The Visiting Committee observed the absence of posted SLE's, the students' unawareness of them and the faculty's misunderstanding of a SLE. In discussion with the leadership team, the Visiting Committee discovered that the leadership team felt the absence of SLE's was due to the training they received which lacked the clarity needed to develop appropriate SLE's in accordance with the WCEA guidelines. The Visiting Committee has communicated to the leadership team the importance of SLE's and is making the recommendation of an action plan goal related to the SLE's.

B. Capacity to Implement and Monitor the Action Plan

Accreditation Factor #12: *The school demonstrates the capacity to implement and monitor an Action Plan that ensures high achievement of all students of the Schoolwide Learning Expectations, Arch/diocesan curriculum standards (local curriculum standards where Arch/diocesan standards don't exist), and other governing authority expectations.*

The Visiting Committee observed that Saint Mary's School is effective in the monitoring processes that are incorporated in the Action Plan. There are clear steps for the assessment and evaluation of this plan. Through the Visiting Committee's observation, we view communication and involvement to be strong and ongoing with all shareholders and believe they will continue to keep them informed about the implementation and monitoring of the Action Plan.

Saint Mary's School administration and faculty will monitor the Action Plan on student achievement through formal and informal assessments as each goal is examined and implemented. Priorities and future actions will be determined based on these results. Saint

Mary's School has identified resources needed for implementation of their Action Plan and has a clear understanding of how to maintain these resources.

The Visiting Committee feels that the only impediments that the school must address in order to accomplish the Action Plan would be lack of resources and any potential staff turnover. We also believe that the completion of their strategic plan will give them additional footing for their future.

Visiting Committee Summary Thoughts:

The Visiting Committee observed that Saint Mary's School is a viable and academically strong Catholic School. Their Catholic Identity was truly evident and permeates within the school community.

We applaud the Pastor for his dedication and time that he commits to the school as well as his vision for the future for the families of the school.

We commend the principal for her fiscal perseverance and capable leadership.

We recognize the faculty and staff for being models of the Catholic faith, strong educators and kind and compassionate leaders.

We appreciate the parents for their support and involvement in the Catholic education of their children.

We respect the students for their welcoming attitude, their display of Catholic values and their love of education.