

Minnesota Catholic Identity Benchmarks for Schools Self Study Narratives

1. **MISSION AND PHILOSOPHY:** The school will have mission and philosophy statements that articulate the Catholicity of the school community's shared vision, principles, beliefs, and core values.

Indicators of Compliance:

- The school's mission and philosophy statements clearly reflect a commitment to Catholic identity and to the beliefs of the Catholic Church.*
- The school's mission and philosophy statements correlate to the mission statement of its sponsoring faith community, where applicable (parish, religious community, etc.)*
- The school promotes the uniqueness and/or spirituality of its namesake to students, parents, faculty, staff, advisory board members and the broader community.*
- The mission statement is displayed prominently throughout the school.*
- The mission and philosophy statements are included in school communications such as handbooks, websites, newsletters, etc.*
- The mission and philosophy are communicated and modeled by all constituents.*
- The mission and philosophy statements are used as a standard in decision making.*

- 2. INFORMATIVE DEVELOPMENT OF FAITH:** The school will be a faith community that nurtures the spiritual lives of students, families, staff members and all others having contact with the school. A systematic plan for catechizing students will shape the religion curriculum. A variety of opportunities will be available for the entire school community to worship and pray together.

Indicators of Compliance:

- Parents are supported in their role as the primary educator of their children and are encouraged to participate in the liturgies and other religious activities of the school.*
- There are daily opportunities for prayer as a whole school and in each classroom.*
- The school actively encourages students to explore potential vocations to the priesthood or religious life.*
- Written religion curriculum is included in the curriculum handbook and religion instruction utilizes both Divine and human methodology as outlined in the National Directory for Catechesis 27-29. High school curriculum is in alignment with the Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age (USCCB).*
- All-school and/or grade level Masses are celebrated on a regular basis. (Ideally, once per week)*
- School Masses are planned and celebrated in accord with the directives of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, Redemptionis Sacramentum, and other documents governing the liturgy issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments, as well as any pertinent local legislation regarding the celebration of the sacraments.*
- Students are provided with regular opportunities to partake in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. (Minimum of twice per year.)*
- Catholic practices and rituals (adoration, benediction, liturgical seasons, Marian devotions, commemoration of Feast Days, the Rosary, etc.) are integrated into the life of the school.*
- Textbooks used are in conformity with the Catechism of the Catholic Church as determined by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.*
- The Catholic Social Teachings and the corporal and spiritual works of mercy are systematically integrated into the religion curriculum.*
- The school communicates with parents concerning the religious and academic education of their children.*

- 3. FORMATIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE & FACILITIES:** Catholic schools will display their Catholicity in the physical environment and be welcoming, inclusive, and safe for all who enter the facilities, including families, volunteers, and guests. Schools will develop age-appropriate standards of conduct for students and implement personal safety curriculum according to diocesan policy.

Indicators of Compliance:

- The school adheres to the safe environment training programs for children and young people as required by the diocese.*
- The school displays evidence of sensitivity to the physical, intellectual, economic, and social-emotional differences of students.*
- The school displays evidence of sensitivity to race, gender, age, religious traditions, and families.*
- All new families, especially those from immigrant populations, are assisted with their integration into the school community.*
- A process is in place to ensure that all people who enter the school building during the day are welcomed and verified for security.*
- A crucifix is clearly displayed in every classroom.*
- Religious statues, icons, and other representations of Catholic artwork are prominently displayed in classrooms and throughout the school.*
- Portraits of the Pope and the Bishop are displayed in a prominent position within the school.*

4. **TRANSFORMATIVE FAITH COMMUNITY:** The school will actively promote a Catholic culture in which discipleship in Jesus Christ, evangelization and service are integral elements within the life of the school.

Indicators of Compliance:

- Students are given opportunities to work in service for the local, national and global community.*
- All service activities are directly connected to discipleship in Jesus Christ and the spreading of the Gospel.*
- Service opportunities are tied to students' understanding of the Catholic Social Teachings and the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.*
- Students are provided with the opportunity to reflect on how their service experiences relate to discipleship and share those experiences with others.*

5. **GOVERNANCE AND POLICIES:** The school's governing body, policies, documents, and management practices will reflect the Catholic mission and philosophy of the school.

Indicators of Compliance:

- The hiring process strongly emphasizes the recruitment of practicing Catholics who understand and accept the teachings of the Catholic Church and the moral demands of the Gospel. Non-Catholics are only hired for compelling reasons and never as teachers of religion. (National Directory for Catechesis 54.9a and 54.9d)*
- School administrators (president, principal, assistant principal, etc.) are active, practicing Catholics who understand and accept the teachings of the Catholic Church and the moral demands of the Gospel. (National Directory for Catechesis 54.9a)*
- The faculty/staff handbook includes specific mention of the responsibility to adhere, in public life, to the teachings of the Catholic Church.*
- The NCEA Code of Ethics for teachers and the Pastoral Code of Conduct are included in the faculty/staff handbook.*
- The school maintains an Advisory Committee that acts as a consultative body to the canonical administrator and principal.*
- The admissions process acquaints students and their families with the mission, beliefs, and philosophy of the school.*
- Policies related to the mission and philosophy statements are in place to assist financially challenged families with tuition and fees.*
- Policies related to the mission and philosophy statements are in place to provide just compensation structures for faculty and staff.*
- The school's discipline policy is directly connected to its mission and philosophy.*

6. LEADERSHIP, FACULTY AND STAFF: The school’s leadership team, faculty, and staff will know, support, and model the teachings of the Church as outlined in the *General Directory for Catechesis*, paragraphs 114–115 and the *National Directory for Catechesis*, sections 25. A – I, 54.8 and 54.9 a-d. School employees will pursue ongoing religious formation that will enhance the school’s Catholic Identity. All school employees will adhere to “standards of conduct” that reflect Catholic tradition, Canon Law, and current policies (including Articles 12 and 13, *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*).

Indicators of Compliance:

- School administrators and teachers of religion demonstrate the following characteristics of a catechist: (*National Directory for Catechesis* 54.8)
 - Love of God, the Church, the Holy Father, and God’s people
 - Devotion to prayer and the evangelizing mission of the Church
 - Fully convinced of the truths of the Catholic Faith
 - Regular attendance at Sunday Mass and other Holy Days of Obligation
 - Devotion to Mary and the Most Holy Eucharist
- The canonical administrator and/or other associated clergy are actively supportive of the school.
- The school completes background checks on all potential school employees as well as volunteers having regular or unsupervised contact with minors. These files are current and well maintained.
- The school has “standards of conduct” in place for school employees that reflect Catholic tradition, Canon Law, and other current policies (see above). These standards are provided to parents and legal guardians.
- The “standards of conduct,” including the Pastoral Code of Conduct/Volunteer’s Code of Conduct, are signed annually by all school employees/volunteers who have regular or unsupervised contact with minors.
- All administration, faculty, and staff as well as volunteers who have regular or unsupervised contact with minors complete Virtus training sessions. Required Virtus attendance is properly tracked.
- The principal fosters an atmosphere of community throughout the school.
- The principal observes and evaluates the performance of each religion teacher on a regular basis. (*National Directory for Catechesis* 54.9a)
- The school administers the IFG self-assessment tool from the National Catholic Education Association and uses the results to develop a systematic plan for the ongoing faith formation of faculty and staff that includes an annual retreat.

7. **CATHOLIC IDENTITY SCHOOL PLAN FOR IMPROVEMENT:** The school will have a written Catholic Identity improvement plan that is reviewed annually by the variety of stakeholders for accountability and transparency. The preference is to have the goals, strategies, and action steps of the plan as one part of the school strategic plan/improvement plan (consult with your local Office of Catholic Schools). The expectation is to provide progress updates in the annual reporting process.

Indicators of Compliance:

- The Current Catholic Identity School Plan for Improvement is available for review.
- The Catholic Identity objective is a part of the school's strategic plan.
- Annual reports are on file with the Office of Catholic Schools.
- Documentation is available verifying a process is in place for communicating the Catholic Identity improvement plan. The process includes regular updates on progress to the various stakeholders of the school community (annual reports, newsletters, meeting minutes).