

## **In-Depth Study: Religion**

### **Catholic School Religion Standards**

*The following standards have been assessed in "The Catholic Identity of the School" survey and permeate the Religion In-Depth Study.*

1. There shall be evidence of a community of Faith.
2. There are regular and frequent prayer and liturgical experiences which are developmentally and liturgically appropriate and meaningful to students. These experiences are integrated throughout the school program.
3. The religion curriculum provides a doctrinally sound, balanced, sequential, developmentally appropriate, and integrated presentation of the essential content of the Christian message. Religion is infused throughout the educational program.
4. The school community places high priority on spiritual formation. Support of the religious mission of the school is evident.
5. Relevant and developmentally appropriate service projects are an essential part of the curriculum at all levels. Student reflection on the service opportunity is seen as integral at all levels.
6. Faculty and students are challenged to address contemporary issues from a Gospel perspective and from the documents which form the Church's social teaching.

### **FIRST STEP**

Refer to Archdiocesan and/or School Religion Curriculum Guides.

### **SECOND STEP**

Complete "The Catholic Identity of the School" Survey (Appendix L)

### **THIRD STEP**

Describe how your school uses the Archdiocesan and/or School Religion Curriculum Guides. How is the school meeting student needs? Which outcomes are being addressed at a different grade level? What additional outcomes are emphasized?

Religion curriculum expectations, if different than Archdiocesan Religion Curriculum Guides, should be available for review.

## **FOURTH STEP**

- 1) Read each of the criteria statements.
- 2) Respond to each of the indicators listed under the various criteria. Your responses should be comprehensive and specific, providing back-up documentation as necessary.
- 3) You may find the samples of suggested evidence helpful in formulating your responses to the indicators.

### **1. What Students Learn**

#### **Read            Criteria**

The school provides a challenging, coherent, and relevant curriculum for each student that fulfills the school's philosophy and mission, strengthens Catholic identity and results in student achievement of the Religion Curriculum expectations.

#### **Write            Indicators**

1. State grade level Religion Curriculum expectations in relation to your school's reality.
2. Indicate how the grade level Religion Curriculum expectations help students to do the following:
  - communicate effectively
  - think conceptually
  - solve problems
  - apply knowledge of their faith in realistic situations
  - encourage participation in parish life
3. Indicate how the grade level Religion Curriculum expectations are in alignment with Catholic identity and the school philosophy and mission.
4. Indicate how the grade level Religion Curriculum expectations
  - challenge students
  - lead students to integrate knowledge with other disciplines
  - are inclusive of all learners

5. Describe and evaluate the articulation process used to develop grade level Religion Curriculum expectations and list the resources used in this process.
6. In preparation for writing your action plan, discuss ways to strengthen what students learn.

### **Suggested Evidence**

The following statements might help you in addressing the above:

- religious truths and values are integrated across the curriculum
- curriculum expectations are in alignment with school philosophy and mission
- elements of Community, Message, Service, and Worship are integral components of lesson planning and instruction
- concepts are integrated with religion and other areas of curriculum
- students communicate effectively, think creatively, problem solve, and apply knowledge to real life situations
- curriculum goals are articulated and implemented among and between grade levels
- instructional learning expectations, teaching methods, and assessment are correlated
- procedures are in place for curriculum development, evaluation, and revision
- master schedules and daily schedules give evidence that religion is a priority
- diverse needs of all students are adequately addressed
- homework policy is appropriate to the developmental level of students
- current educational research is reflected in this curriculum area (both methodology and written student expectations)
- selection process is utilized for reviewing and adopting religion texts and materials
- instruction is evaluated to ensure authenticity in content
- inservice opportunities are provided to update faculty regarding Church teaching

## 2. How Students Learn

### Read Criteria

The professional staff designs and implements a variety of learning and formational experiences which actively engage students and are consistent with the school's philosophy and mission.

### Write Indicators

- 1.. Outline your staff development plan for ensuring continued growth in adult spirituality and faith formation as well as the ability to instill knowledge and Christian values.
2. Describe and evaluate the teaching strategies that are used to enable teachers to be facilitators of student learning and models of the Catholic faith.
3. Describe and evaluate how students are involved in the learning process
4. Give representative examples of collaboration between
  - student and parent
  - student and student
  - student and teacher
  - student and administration
5. Describe and evaluate how all students incorporate the following into their learning.
  - moral decision making skills
  - Christian Service
  - social justice
  - critical thinking skills
  - use of outside resources
6. Describe and evaluate the process by which all students understand what is required to meet grade level Religion Curriculum expectations.
7. In preparation for writing your action plan, discuss ways to strengthen how students learn.

## Suggested Evidence

The following statements will help you in addressing the above:

- student use of resources other than the textbook include effective use of technology, collaborative activities, community resources
- degree of student understanding of the expected level of performance
- effective methods and a variety of approaches to religious instruction are observable
- provisions for the learning needs of students with diverse backgrounds and abilities
- degree to which teachers of various subject areas support students' spiritual growth experiences
- sampling of student work that demonstrates the ability to think critically, problem solve, relate learning to past experience and knowledge, and apply the new learning through concrete examples and experience
- demonstration that students are actively engaged in learning
- student portfolios, projects, performances, discussions
- student and parent interviews
- degree to which various learning styles and needs are addressed through the instructional approaches

### 3. How Assessment is Used

#### Read

#### Criteria

Teacher and student use of assessment is frequent and integrated into the teaching/learning process. Assessment data is the basis for:

- measurement of each student's progress toward the grade level subject area expectations
- regular evaluation and improvement of curriculum and instruction
- allocation of resources

#### Write

#### Indicators

1. Describe and evaluate how students prior knowledge is assessed.
2. Describe and evaluate the assessment methods used.
3. Describe and evaluate how students at all grade levels are involved in the assessment of their own learning.

4. Describe and evaluate what provisions/modifications are made in assessing students with special learning differences.
5. Review and evaluate how findings obtained from all forms of assessment (ACRE, Catholic Identity Survey, portfolios, authentic assessment, etc.) show growth in student learning.
6. Indicate how assessment is used to:
  - evaluate student progress in achieving grade level Religion Curriculum expectations
  - improve instructional strategies
  - allocate resources for Religion.
7. Describe and evaluate how the assessment plan correlates with the philosophy and mission of the school.
8. In preparation for writing your action plan, discuss ways to strengthen the assessment program.

### **Suggested Evidence**

The following statements might help you in addressing the above:

- teachers regularly and appropriately assess student progress
- nature and types of assessment
- correlation of assessment to student learning expectations, grade level subject area expectations, and instructional strategies
- student work that demonstrates understanding and application of knowledge and skills
- student portfolios, projects, performances, discussion
- allocation of resources, including the provision for professional development opportunities, based upon assessment results
- grading policy holistically and accurately reflects real student learning
- technological evidence through student videos, student digital camera pictures, and multimedia projects and presentations

#### **4. Faith Experience**

##### **Read Criteria**

The school community places high priority on frequent prayer and liturgical experiences which are developmentally and liturgically appropriate and meaningful. Spiritual formation and support of the religious mission of the school are a priority.

##### **Write Indicators**

1. Describe and evaluate how the school gives regular evidence of meaningful expressions of worship and the centrality of prayer. (Comment on daily prayers in the classrooms, types of liturgical/paraliturgical prayer experiences, celebration of the sacraments, etc.)
2. Describe and evaluate the ways in which students are involved in the broader parish life.
3. Indicate how the Church's liturgical year is visibly reinforced throughout the school.
4. Describe how a variety of age appropriate and liturgically oriented prayer forms are used in student gatherings, as well as faculty and parent meetings.
5. Describe and evaluate the sacramental programs and how parents are encouraged to be the primary educators of their children.
6. Describe and evaluate the role of the pastor, principal, parish staff, and parents in the spiritual life of the school.
7. Describe and evaluate the school as a "community of faith".
8. In preparation for writing your action plan, discuss ways to strengthen the faith experience of the school community.

## **Suggested Evidence**

The following statements might help you in addressing the above:

- conscious and deliberate effort is made to develop a faith community within the school
- attitudes of respect for the dignity of each individual pervade the school atmosphere
- gospel values are reflected throughout the school
- variety of prayer experiences, community service projects, and spiritual formation opportunities are provided at an age appropriate level
- opportunities for participation in celebrations of the Eucharist and other Sacraments are available
- students participate in traditional Catholic devotions
- faculty prays together regularly
- programs to assist parents in their own faith development and in their role as primary educators of their children are provided
- cultural differences are recognized and celebrated
- dignity of the individual is preserved in the evaluation and disciplinary processes.
- students are challenged to live in a socially responsible way