

**Designing our Future  
Visiting Team Report  
For  
Saint Bernadette School  
245 Azalea Drive  
Monroeville, PA 15146-1797**

**By**

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**Appointed by:  
Middle States Association  
Of Colleges and Schools**

**Commission on Elementary Schools**

The contents of this report represent the judgments of the members of the Visiting Team, as interpreted and written by the chair. They do not necessarily represent the opinion of the Commission on Elementary Schools or of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools.

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## **Introduction to the Visit**

Saint Bernadette Catholic School in Monroeville, PA has been educating young people since 1959 when the Sisters of St. Joseph first opened with 225 first and second graders. Enrollment continued to increase in the '60's and soon the school had eight grades. At present the school educates Pre-school (ages 3 and 4) as well as Kindergarten through 8th grades. The original building has progressed to ensure not only the classrooms mentioned, but additional rooms to facilitate learning in Art, Computer and Science. Along with this an additional building that houses a gym, cafeteria and an all-purpose room is shared by the parish for many social functions.

Using an earlier mission statement as their initial guide the administration and co-chairs Mrs. Frankola and Mrs. McGranahan met with selected members of the faculty, under the direction of representatives of the Diocese of Pittsburgh to begin the Middle States process in 2008.

The Middle States Team received a copy of St. Bernadette's report prior to their visit. The team met at the Comfort Suites in Monroeville before proceeding to the opening ceremony at the Lourdes Center at the school. The team was met by the principal, Sister Carol Arch, C.S.J. and the co-chairs Mrs. Frankola and Mrs. McGranahan. Father Edward L. Yuhus, pastor of St. Bernadette's parish joined us as we were hosted for a delicious dinner with all the trimmings and atmosphere. Entertainment by the school's Cantor Choir directed by Mrs. Adrienne Prestogorge was punctuated with the smiles of the students as well as the audience. Following several songs, the eighth grade class presented an original film presentation with the help of their teacher. The faculty and friends of the school attended this opening presentation. The evening ended and the team retired to their lodging for the beginning of many meetings to complete the report for Middle States.

The warmth and hospitality was evident throughout the entire visit on site as well as at our accommodations at the Comfort Suites with every possible amenity available.

## **The Mission & Beliefs Study**

### **Description:**

St. Bernadette Catholic School is instrumental in educating the young people in a supportive setting. In accordance with Gospel values the school assists parents in the formal education of their children.

The mission of St. Bernadette Catholic School is to enable all children to develop their unique, individual potential by blending knowledge and faith to become the leaders of tomorrow.

Using an earlier mission statement as a guide, the co-chairs met with selected members of the faculty and drafted a mission statement. At a subsequent faculty meeting, all members of the faculty had the opportunity to review the draft. Through discussion certain changes were agreed upon, leading to the statement as presented here.

St. Bernadette School Belief Statements:

We believe:

- \*Children are the world's most valuable assets.
- \*In the dignity and individuality of each student.
- \*That parish and parental involvement is essential.
- \*In developing a sense of responsibility to the global community.
- \*In a faith community that strives to serve all people.

A copy of the belief statements and mission statements appear in the school handbook, on the school web site, and are posted in each classroom. They are the subject of discussion with parents and students at various times throughout the school year.

### **Commendations:**

1. The visiting team commends the visibility of the mission and beliefs statements throughout the building.
2. The visiting team commends the publication of the mission and belief statements in the parent/student handbook and on the school website.
3. The visiting team commends the administration and faculty for modeling these statements.

**Recommendations:**

1. The visiting team recommends that the school community continue to incorporate the statements into the daily lives of the students.
2. The visiting team recommends that the faculty and administration continue to review the statements as needed.
3. The visiting team recommends continuing to include the discussion with parents and students during the school year.

**MSA STANDARD 1: PHILOSOPHY/MISSION**

The school has a clearly written and actively implemented statement of philosophy/mission that conveys the general and specific purposes of its educational program, expresses expectations for quality, and serves as the basis for daily operational and instructional decision making as well as long-range planning. Stakeholders give input into the development of the school's philosophy/mission and understand and accept it. This document is aligned with the community served and is reviewed periodically by stakeholder representatives.

**Comments:**

St. Bernadette Catholic School demonstrates that they are educating young people in a supportive setting, in accordance with Gospel values.

**The team believes the standard is met**

## **The Community Study**

### **Description:**

St. Bernadette School appears to project a slow and steady decline in student population over the next five years. It appears to level off during year 5 in the mid 280's.

Based on the projections of the following sub-groups: Remedial Math, Remedial Reading, Title I and Special Needs, St. Bernadette School appears to remain steady for students enrolled in these programs over the next five year projection.

It appears according to the Student Stability Chart that once a student is in the St. Bernadette School system they stay. It also appears that many new students are picked up from grade 4 through grade 7.

Terra Nova results show above anticipated scores for all grade levels and subject areas. Writing assessments show marked improvement the longer a student remains in the academic program.

**Comments:** The school is making preparations for longevity by improving the facility and adding 3 classrooms.

### **Commendations:**

1. The visiting team commends the school for their achievements on scoring above anticipated scores for all grade levels and subjects on all student performance assessments.
2. The visiting team commends the Sisters of St. Joseph for their continuous support and dedication to St. Bernadette School Community.
3. The visiting team commends the school community for making preparations for expansions for the future.

### **Recommendations:**

1. The visiting team recommends that steps be taken to continue the presence of the Sisters of St. Joseph to continue the rich tradition that their community has established at St. Bernadette School.
2. The visiting team recommends an enrollment management committee be formed in place of the recruitment committee to facilitate retention of students in addition to recruiting new students.

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3. The visiting team recommends updates both in the parish and school websites in order to facilitate community awareness.

## **The Student Services and Student Activities Study**

### **Description:**

St. Bernadette School provides multiple streams of student services and student activities. Student services are systematic and integral to the educational program. They are provided by qualified personnel, sufficiently finance, periodically evaluated, and congruent with the philosophy and mission.

### **Food Service:**

Lunch is provided by a private catering service in The Lourdes Center dining hall. The building was constructed in 2006 and is spacious, clean, and air-conditioned. A hot lunch is offered daily with a variety of healthy choices. Students are able to purchase milk and bring a bag lunch. The lunch program is fully funded by the parents. Payment is made directly to the catering company. The lunch program is not federally funded or supported in any way.

### **Transportation Services:**

Buses provided by seven school districts transport approximately 84% of the students with the remainder of students transported by parents. Opposite entrances are used for buses and car riders with supervision by the principal and teachers given at dismissal. Gateway School District provides buses for field trips and is free for local field trips within the district limits and a fee required outside the district.

### **Health Services:**

A school nurse is in the building one day per week and on call for emergencies all other days. Routine screenings such as vision, hearing, BMI, and scoliosis are performed by the school nurse. Health records are maintained in a confidential locked file cabinet. Medications are locked in a cabinet in the school office.

Educational health programs are provided throughout the school year for the students. Teachers coordinate curriculum related topics for the individual classrooms. CPR training, defibrillator training, and First Aid workshops have been offered to staff members and students.

### **Guidance/Counseling Services:**

St. Bernadette School is provided a guidance counselor one day a week by the AIU. The counselor meets in class groups as well as with individuals. There is a clear process for referring students for help and support, made by the classroom teacher as well as the parents. The self-study identifies a need to increase availability of the guidance counselor.

### **Special Services:**

Academic Support, Student Assistance Program and AIU services such as Speech and Language, and Title I Reading and Math are available at St. Bernadette School. Students can also attend gifted programs in their home school districts. Students in the SAP Program and the Academic Support Program are monitored monthly. Meetings with parents are scheduled when a change in behavior or regression is noted. The self-study indicated that the teachers would benefit from further in-service on the Academic Support Program, in particular the application and necessity for Growth Plans.

**Recruitment, Admissions, and Placement of Students:**

A recruitment committee was introduced and efforts such as the distribution of brochures to prospective families were initiated. The school website was updated.

**Student Activities: Extended Day**

St. Bernadette offers both before- and after-school programs. Students may utilize this service from 7 A.M. until 6 P.M.

**Commendations:**

1. The visiting team commends the principal and staff for implementing written policies and procedures to ensure the safety of students at drop off and dismissal times.
2. The visiting team commends St. Bernadette School for providing well-balanced lunches and a functional, clean dining area with a well-supervised atmosphere.
3. The visiting team commends the use of the AIU Support services for guidance and Title I Reading and Math, as well as community resources to support the staff in their efforts.

**Recommendations:**

1. The visiting team recommends that further in-service is provided for the entire staff on the Academic Support program, in particular the application and necessity for Growth Plans for all students who present a need.
2. The visiting team recommends that the recruitment committee extend itself to an Advancement Committee after attending the Diocesan sponsored Advancement meetings during the current school year.
3. The visiting team recommends continuing the positive relationship with Gateway School District in providing transportation for field trips.

**MSA STANDARD 10: STUDENT SERVICES**

The school implements written policies and procedures, in partnership with families and the community, that provide all students with, or refer them to, services that are age and developmentally appropriate to optimize opportunities for life-long success. Student services are systematic and integral to the educational program. They are provided by qualified personnel, sufficiently financed, periodically evaluated, and philosophy/mission appropriate.

**Comments:**

St. Bernadette is a school that has embraced fully its mission to provide excellence in education and opportunities for all of its children. This is evident not only in the academic programs that

are provided for all students but also in the support systems/student services that have been put in place to support: social/emotional growth; differentiated learning needs; and increased learning opportunities. The guidance, educational support, and special services stand out especially as on target for optimizing student success. The school has identified and set goals in areas for further growth which include increased guidance services and continued communication with Gateway School District to improve transportation safety.

**The team believes the standard is met.**

## **MSA STANDARD 11: STUDENT LIFE AND STUDENT ACTIVITIES**

The school provides access to non-discriminatory student activities that are age- and developmentally appropriate to supplement the educational program. A balance of academic, social, co- or extra-curricular and service activities is maintained. Student activities are selected to foster intellectual, cultural, and social growth as well as physical health and wellness. Student activities provide opportunities for student leadership and social interaction and encourage development of student interests. These activities are adequately financed, periodically reviewed by stakeholders, managed by school governance and leadership, and appropriate to the school's philosophy/mission.

### **Comments:**

Students at St. Bernadette School can express their talents and interests by contributing to a variety of school-sponsored extracurricular activities. These include athletic interscholastic activities including soccer, cross country, football, cheerleading, basketball, and track and field. Social activities include PTG classroom parties, Ice Cream Social, movie nights, bowling, and dances for the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Academic activities available to the students include: Science Fair, Spelling Bee, English Festival, Starbase, and guest speakers and presentations. Literary and arts-related activities are available to the students. Additionally, students have a variety of Spiritual development opportunities including Cantor Choir, altar servers and lectors.

Students can participate in various activities that build leadership skills and service-related activities as well. Various assemblies, field trips and Catholic Schools' Week also contribute to curriculum enhancements and social interactions.

### **Commendations:**

- 1 The visiting team commends St. Bernadette School for providing ample interscholastic opportunities for academic growth and enrichment, appealing to a variety of interests and needs.
- 2 The visiting team commends St. Bernadette School for the many opportunities for spiritual growth and enrichment, including abundant service-related projects.
- 3 The visiting team commends the variety of social activities available to the students throughout the school year.

**Recommendations:**

- 1 The visiting team recommends the efforts to meet environmental concerns through more “green” activities be continued.
- 2 The visiting team recommends the reinstatement of the Student Council or functional committees to develop leadership skills of the students.
- 3 The visiting team recommends that community involvement be incorporated to highlight the many activities St. Bernadette School offers to assist with enrollment management and Advancement goals.

**The team believes the standard is met.**

## **The Educational Program Study**

### **Description: Language Arts**

The Diocesan Language Arts committee reviews available texts that are recommended for the teaching of Catholic values. Teachers attend workshops for each available text and choose an appropriate series to implement into their curriculum. Teacher assessments and input evaluate the success of the materials. The following texts are used for language arts instruction:

- *Houghton-Mifflin Reading* (2008) for grades K-6
- *Abrams & Company Publishers Inc. Land of THE LETTER PEOPLE* (2002) for K
- ABRAMS & COMPANY Publishers Inc. *Let's Write with The Letter People*
- Holt *Elements of Literature* (2005) for grades 7-8
- Modern Curriculum Press *Comprehension Plus* (2001) for gr. 2-6
- *Houghton-Mifflin English* (2006) for grades 2-6
- *Houghton-Mifflin English* (1998) for grades 7-8
- Modern Curriculum Press *Phonics* (2003) for grades K-4
- Palmer Method *Handwriting* (1987) for grades 2-5
- SANRON Educational Enterprises Incorporated *Teach Me Writing* (1998) for grades K-6

Procedures for identifying students in need of academic support are as follows:

- *Developmental Test of Kindergarten Reading Readiness II* (Kindergarten)
- *DIBELS* assessments - Allegheny Intermediate Unit Support Services
- *Terra Nova / In-View* reading and language arts tests (2-8)
- Formal assessments from language arts textbook publishers
- Informal classroom assessments
- Individual assessments for particular students by professionals from outside agencies

Teacher evaluations, Terra Nova Test scores and In-View results are used to determine students in need of enrichment or support. Gifted students are referred to special programs within their school districts. Students in need of the Student Assistance Program and Diocesan Special Needs Program are referred. All modifications are made according to individual needs.

Several examples of modifications are as follows:

- Test adaptations
- Preferential seating
- Highlight instructions
- Chunking material
- Peer tutoring
- Enrichment activities

Horizontally, concepts and skills are introduced in the systematic, sequential order recommended by the authors of the various texts used and outlined in the Pennsylvania and Diocesan standards.

An instructional approach, in which all the language arts are integrated, is used. In kindergarten through grade two the same series is used for instruction in reading, spelling and English.

In grades three through eight spelling is incorporated into the reading series, but separate English texts are used. However, an effort is made to coordinate the instruction in those subjects within the reading program. Handwriting is practiced throughout the language arts curriculum.

Vertically, use of the same instructional series across a number of grade levels offers consistency in coordination of the curriculum. The same literature-based series is used in Kindergarten through six.

In grades seven and eight the elements of literature are introduced through a more age-appropriate text. The same cursive handwriting method is taught in grades two through five. Students are expected to continue to practice this method in grades six through eight. These consistent methods insure that these concepts and skills are introduced at the appropriate grade level. They are built upon and reinforced as the students advance through the grades.

**Commendations:**

1. The visiting team commends the cultural relevance of the program which meets the needs of children of various ability levels.
2. The visiting team commends the incorporation of literature studies within the program along with a continuation of handwriting skills throughout the school
3. The visiting team commends the encompassing curriculum involving reading, writing, listening, and speaking along with the integration of Catholic Values.

**Recommendations:**

1. The visiting team recommends increased internet access within the classrooms to enhance literature studies.
2. The visiting team recommends more in services on technology and its relationship to the studies of language arts.
3. The visiting team recommends looking into the possibility of a library science instructor, even if that person might need to be a volunteer.

## **The Educational Program Study**

### **Description: Social Studies**

The major techniques of instruction in this program area for each age group and/or grade level is appropriate for each grade level. At all grade levels a variety of instructional techniques are employed such as cooperative learning, large group instruction, peer pairing and the following:

#### Primary Level

- Field Trips
- Hands-on Projects
- Videos
- Role playing
- Introduction to map skills
- Junior Achievement
- Flat Stanley project
- Multicultural activities

#### Intermediate Level

- Use of atlas, globes, desk maps and projects
- Field trips
- Hands-on projects
- Note taking (outlining)
- Multicultural activities

#### Upper Elementary

- Note taking (outlining)
- Field trips
- Term papers and projects
- Economics
- Future Cities Engineering competition
- Current events
- Technology
- Map skills and study
- Debate
- Multicultural activities

Safety and Bullying Programs help to increase student self esteem and awareness. The programs assist students in identifying the positive qualities they possess and enable them to utilize them to their fullest potential. Students have the opportunity to participate in a variety of school programs.

- Bullying program
- D.A.R.E. program
- Officer Phil/Safety Program
- Service projects
- Bee Kind
- Chimbote Mission Awareness
- Columbian Mission Education Program – Journey With Jesus

Special Thematic Units are emphasized throughout the grade levels. These units include:

- Egypt
- The Holocaust
- Mexico
- Native American Indians
- Moment in History videos
- Pennsylvania History

**Commendations:**

1. The visiting team commends the incorporation of Catholic and civic values throughout the Social Studies program.
2. The visiting team commends St. Bernadette School that their scores exceed Diocesan expectations.
3. The visiting team commends the responsibility displayed by their students through global and community service and their “green initiative”.

**Recommendations:**

1. The visiting team recommends getting updated social studies resources such as maps, via the Smart Board.
2. The visiting team recommends that if trying to increase the amount of time spent on social studies, it be incorporated into the language arts and computer curriculum to add time spent on studies.
3. The visiting team recommends new text books in the area of social studies which are already being investigated and an attempt to add individual computer access possibly via a traveling cart of laptops.

## **The Educational Program Study**

### **Description: Science**

All teachers follow curriculum guidelines created by the Diocese of Pittsburgh. This is developed using state and national academic science standards. It is provided to science teachers in all schools. Science teachers meet in departments according to grade level. Teachers maintain and revise the curriculum to meet specific needs of the students in the school. These needs are met by weekly inquiry based experiments, demonstrations, speakers, field trips, annual science fair, and Internet based investigations.

The text *Science*, published by Scott Foresman (2010) is used in grades 1-5. The sixth, seventh, and eighth grade textbook is *Science*, by Glencoe/McGraw Hill (published in 2008, 2002 and 2002 respectively). Science teachers meet yearly to review curriculum needs. The Diocese of Pittsburgh provides a list of approved textbooks that meet the Diocesan Curriculum. Teachers voluntarily attend publishers' in-service meetings to gather materials and information necessary to make final selections. Teachers then meet to review curriculum needs and make textbook selections. The school has a fully equipped science lab, with a capacity to hold a classroom. The lab inventory lists all materials, and is updated as needed.

The use of interactive white boards is one change to the science curriculum in recent years. Also, new textbooks have been implemented in grades 1-6. The annual science fair now requires the integration of technology through a Power Point presentation by the eighth grade students. Students in grade five attend McKeever Environmental Learning Center. The fifth grade class also participates in the Starbase program located in North Versailles, PA. This program emphasizes science, technology, math, team building, and drug awareness. Field trips to the Pittsburgh Zoo and Aquarium, Carnegie Science Center, Heinz Natural History Museum, and Linsly Center are examples of resources that supplement the curriculum. The seventh and eighth grade classes participate in the Future Cities Competition, in which they plan, develop, create, and build a model of a city of the future.

### **Commendations:**

1. The visiting team commends the use of textbooks that meet the diocesan curriculum guidelines.
2. The visiting team commends the availability of a science lab and the accessibility of the outdoors at St. Bernadette School.
3. The visiting team commends the use of higher level thinking skills, real world applications and creative approaches to problem solving.

### **Recommendations:**

1. The visiting team recommends that consideration should be given to scheduling weekly science labs and planning periods to coincide.
2. The visiting team recommends more in-servicing in Science to promote better teaching methods and increased use of Smart Boards.
3. The visiting team recommends continuing to evaluate the Science Program to meet the ongoing trends in Science.

## **The Educational Program Study**

### **Description: Technology**

The Technology Plan was formulated by the Technology teacher and is updated as necessary to allow for new and advancing curriculum additions.

The Technology teacher selects the curriculum focus for the appropriate grade level and breaks it into weekly lessons with projects for evaluation.

Annual review of curriculum as well as additions to the curriculum as the year progresses, are part of the Technology teacher's input as well as the faculty's needs.

Built around a scope and sequence of 500 learning objectives in ten key technology areas:

- Operating Environments
- Databases
- Spreadsheets
- Graphics
- Internet
- Multimedia
- Programming
- Desktop Publishing
- Applied Technology
- Word Processing

By design, each lesson builds upon the technology skills, the learning objectives, and the content knowledge taught in preceding lessons.

The major techniques of instruction in this program area for each age group and/or grade level:

- Primary
  - Small groups
  - Smart Board
  - Hands-on computer activities
  - Keyboard basics
  - Comfortable use of the mouse
  - Differentiated Instruction
  
- Intermediate
  - Hands-on activities
  - Smart Board Instruction
  - LCD projector
  - Microsoft WORD
  - Microsoft EXCEL
  - Microsoft Power Point
  - Movie Maker

- Middle/Junior High
  - Smart Board Instruction
  - LCD Projector
  - Hands on computer activities
  - Projects using Microsoft Products partnered with Classroom projects

**Commendations:**

1. The visiting team commends the use of cross curricular activities at all instructional levels.
2. The visiting team commends the use of technology as a means to an end, a way to apply all skills.
3. The visiting team commends the use of student excitement for student motivation.

**Recommendations:**

1. The visiting team recommends that color printers that can handle high volume usage be obtained.
2. The visiting team recommends an updated server be put into use immediately as a back-up to the present server that runs the entire system in the school.
3. The visiting team recommends more professional development in the usage of Smart Boards and continues to upgrade Smart Board purchases.
4. The visiting team recommends obtaining laptops on a mobile cart to facilitate technology usage in the regular classroom setting.
5. The visiting team recommends that the idea of the Print Shop Mentality in the upper grades be implemented and expanded; further increasing student excitement and motivation.

## **The Educational Program Study**

### **Description: Physical Education**

The curriculum for the Physical education department follows for the most part, the Revised Physical Education Curriculum of the Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh.

Materials for instruction are chosen according to the needs of individual students and classes. For example, during the soccer unit the use soccer balls with two goals located at each end of the measured area. For basketball, the use all 6 baskets located in the gymnasium for practice of taught shooting, dribbling and passing drills. The four side baskets can be raised and lowered to a specific height to accommodate all age and grade levels. Student evaluation is based on game skills and individual participation.

The opening of the new Physical Education center, Lourdes Center has allowed the expansion of the physical education curriculum to incorporate more games and activities.

➤ Primary:

- Locomotive and non-locomotive movements
- Simple exercises such as stretching, listening, and following simple instructions in order to succeed in individual and group activities.

➤ Intermediate:

- Locomotive and non-locomotive movements
- Physical fitness testing
- Various exercises and organized games

Working with others through development of a team concept and positive competitive spirit helps to promote the ability to deal with success as well as adversity.

Students are encouraged to always try their best and get the most out of the abilities they have. The knowledge that you have done the best you can is physically as well as mentally rewarding.

### **Commendations:**

1. The visiting team commends the school for providing the opportunity for students to participate in many games and exercises that they might otherwise never experience.
2. The visiting team commends the stressing of Christian values and fair play.
3. The visiting team commends the parish and school community for providing a facility of the caliber of Lourdes Center.

### **Recommendations:**

1. The visiting team recommends the replacement of worn out equipment as needed.
2. The visiting team recommends the purchase of new volleyball equipment, so that volleyball can be added to the instructional program.
3. The visiting team recommends that more research is done into looking at more instructional time for the intermediate and middle school students.

## **The Educational Program Study**

### **Math:**

The ongoing math committee selected at the diocesan level develops the curriculum guidelines. Many resources are used to compile the guidelines including scope and sequence charts, previous curriculum materials, and state and national standards. Using performance indicators, mathematics teachers modify and adapt methodology to meet all students' needs. A variety of instructional techniques are used to meet the needs of all learners.

Mathematics teachers meet yearly to review curriculum needs. The Diocese of Pittsburgh provides a list of approved textbooks that meet the Diocesan curriculum guidelines. Individual departments review the selections from the approved list and provide recommendations. Local administrators provide the timeline for selection of ordering new materials.

The classroom teacher through observations, formal/informal assessments, Terra Nova scores, and parental input usually identifies learning discrepancies. Once discrepancies are identified teaching methods are adapted to meet all learning styles. Some interventions used are color-coding, use of manipulatives, use of charts and graphs, and Internet-based programs. Students, who qualify, attend the Allegheny Intermediate Unit program for additional small group instruction.

The changes that have occurred are due to advances in technology. Interactive Smart boards and Internet based programs, such as Math Street is incorporated into the daily curriculum. Manipulatives, materials, tools, and software are requested and purchased as needed. Teacher training on new technology is ongoing.

The classroom atmosphere fosters the development of logical thinking and problem solving in an age appropriate manner. Younger students use manipulatives and other concrete materials to develop skills. As students progress to higher grades, abstract thinking is fostered. Word problems and logic puzzles are some techniques used. Students work both individually and in cooperative groups. Flexible grouping allows students to move to match skill level.

The program strengths are that teachers implement all strands of math, by doing so the majority of the students find success at each grade level. Spiraling is used to help younger students review major concepts. As students graduate eighth grade they are well prepared for higher schools of learning. Most students successfully complete Algebra I. Therefore they are assigned to a higher level math during their freshman year of high school.

Improvements to this program area include the increased use of Smart board technology in daily lessons. Instructional lessons should be more Smart board-based. In addition, lessons should be created to allow students more access to the Smart board.

**Commendations:**

1. The visiting team commends the implementation of all strands of math so that the majority of students find success at each grade level.
2. The visiting team commends the use of spiraling, used to help younger students review major concepts.
3. The visiting team commends the preparation of students for higher schools of learning.

**Recommendations:**

1. The visiting team recommends the increased use of Smart Boards in daily lessons.
2. The visiting team recommends the upgrade of both the quality and quantity of concrete manipulatives used in the younger grades.
3. The visiting team recommends in the long term that Smart Boards be available in every classroom.

**The Educational Program Study****Description: Art Education**

The major techniques of instruction in this program area for each age group and/or grade level are provided by the curriculum guides of the Diocese of Pittsburgh and executed by the art teacher.

**Primary:**

Elements and Principles of Art are introduced using different areas such as Stain Glass windows in church. Each grade studies two artists through the course of the year.

**Upper Grades:** Elements and Principles of Art explored more deeply introducing other areas where art is showcased. Two artists are studied. Knowledge, interpretation, critique of own works are encouraged.

The continuum of thinking skills incorporated into the program is:

- Art projects are developed using a rough draft or sketch approach.
- Children's ideas evolve as they attempt to solve the design problem.
- Appropriate vocabulary, information on cultures, social movements or art periods is introduced.
- Mediums and techniques used by various artists are presented during class.

The assessment methods used to measure student learning for each age group and/or grade level in this program are:

- Art portfolios and sketch diaries are kept
- Older students project shared with younger student
- Observance of students
- Preference to art curriculum from diocese
- Student critique own work
- Student grades are compared to students own work, what they are capable of and on-going observance.

An Art portfolio is initiated in Kindergarten and carried through the grades:

- Photographs of the child's art remains in the portfolio as well as a few best pieces from each year.
- Adaptations are used for individuals as needed.
- Quarterly report card grades reflect a student's progress.

**Commendations:**

- 1 The visiting team commends the number of winners that St. Bernadette School has from various art contests entered.
- 2 The visiting team commends the development of life-long skills in the arts.
- 3 The visiting team commends the enhancement of fine motor skills for each student through Art Projects.

**Recommendations:**

- 1 The visiting team recommends updating the computer programs available to the Art Department for student usage.
- 2 The visiting team recommends further in-servicing of teachers in the areas of computer generated graphic arts.
- 3 The visiting team recommends the allotment of more time for the Fine Arts Program to ensure that students are developing creative skills to accompany their academic learning.

**MSA STANDARD 8: EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM**

The educational program consists of a carefully planned and well-executed curriculum that includes appropriate academic standards, solid pedagogy, and assessment, all based on research and best practices. The educational program is aligned with the school's mission, approved by the governance, sufficiently financed, and periodically reviewed by stakeholders. It is developed to address the needs of all students and is designed to foster and challenge student learners at all levels. Effective policies and procedures are in place, along with instructional materials, technology, and equipment that are appropriate, functional, and well maintained. Written curriculum guides are current, functional, available, and in use. They define scope and sequence of the educational program as well as program objectives and reflect sound approaches to teaching and learning.

**Description:**

Horizontally concepts and skills are introduced in the systematic, sequential order recommended by the authors of the various texts used and outlined also in the Pennsylvania and Diocesan Standards.

Vertically, use of the same instructional series across a number of grade levels offers consistency in coordination of the curriculum. Total staff and department meetings are held to coordinate a horizontal and vertical curriculum. Additional alignments occur with interdisciplinary teaching, team teaching, and ongoing adaptations due to population changes

**Commendations:**

1. The visiting team commends the forward motion of all students as they progress throughout the grades.
2. The visiting team commends the use of skills from previous grade levels to create new paradigms.
3. The visiting team commends the success of this school in fostering self-understanding, self-respect and confidence.

**Recommendations:**

1. The visiting team recommends the constant realignment of curriculum with current philosophies and demographics.
2. The visiting team recommends that vigilance is taken to be sure that subject area curriculum becomes more difficult and sophisticated as students advance through the grades.
3. The visiting team recommends that all teachers integrate a variety of methodologies, resources and teaching styles to meet the needs of each student and to reflect sound approaches to teaching and learning.

**The team believes the standard is met.**

## **MSA STANDARD 9: ASSESSMENT AND EVIDENCE OF STUDENT LEARNING**

The school systematically collects and rigorously analyzes quantifiable and observable evidence of individual learning and growth from multiple valid and reliable sources. Evidence of student learning is used to evaluate and improve curriculum effectiveness, instructional practices, professional development, and support services. Progress in student learning and performance is expected and is accurately, clearly, and systematically reported to the school community.

### **Description:**

Terra Nova tests are given annually. The results show above anticipated scores for all grade levels and subjects

Writing assessments also given annually show marked improvement the longer a student remains in the academic programs.

The frequency of testing is yearly from Grade Two until Grade Eight for Terra Nova testing.

Writing assessments are across all levels yearly from Kindergarten until Grade Eight.

In addition a variety of testing was evident in all areas and in every level from Pre-K to eighth grade. Testing includes formal assessments, pen and pencil tests and quizzes and prepared teacher tests.

Test results are sent home as soon as school personnel analyze them.

If test results need further explanation this takes place during scheduled parent conferences.

Acre tests are given annually in grades five and eight to assess comprehension of the catechism of the Catholic Church. It also measures attitudes of Christian values.

Educators use the results for referrals and classroom academic decisions. Children are referred for Math and Reading assistance and also gifted programs based on results.

### **Commendations:**

1. The visiting team commends the teachers for their use of test results in assessing student needs.
2. The visiting team commends the entire faculty for their dedication in using all the tools available to them when using differentiating instruction.
3. The visiting team commends teachers for the variety of assessments used in their work with students.

**Recommendations:**

1. The visiting team recommends that Terra Nova testing be utilized to identify students in need of Growth Plans.
2. The visiting team recommends the continued use of Acre Tests to assess the understanding of catechetical guidelines.
3. The visiting team recommends the expansion of Dibels Testing to provide objective assessment of language standards up to and including sixth grade.

**The team believes the standard is met.**

**The Religion Program Study****Description:**

St. Bernadette School follows the Catechetical curriculum directives of the Diocese of Pittsburgh. The guidelines present concepts that are taught through whole and in small group instruction, role-playing, drama, prayer experiences, journaling, cooperative learning, and Catholic/Christian Mediation. The principal and pastor schedule sacrament preparation and weekly liturgies to enhance the Catholic life of the students. The Diocese of Pittsburgh requires a catechetical certification of its Religion teachers as well as days of recollection for its teachers which includes liturgy. The pastor or pastoral associate celebrates mass for grades 1 to 4 on Wednesday and grades 5 to 8 attend on Friday.

The parent of the students in the sacramental programs attend preparation meeting and Catholic Vision of Love parent meetings and are welcome at weekly liturgies with their children. Visible in the halls and classrooms are crucifixes and other Christian art. The teachers implement the Catechetical program “We Believe” (2010) in planning and presenting lessons. Doctrinal and historical aspects of the faith as well as Gospel values are taught and demonstrated by the faculty. Students respond by being a vital part of the faith community by their participation in all aspects of the life of the school and parish. The parish and school community participate in various outreach projects. Various methods are used to assess student learning in the catechetical program:

- Teaching and memorization of formal prayers
- Guided informal prayers
- Dramatization and reading of Bible stories
- Class participation
- Prayers through songs and gestures
- Grade level testing
- Putting religious values into action – Outreach programs
- ACRE Testing in grades 5 and 8
- Religion journaling
- Participation in Prayer Services and Mass

St. Bernadette School provides opportunities for the school to serve the wider Community by:

- Monthly food drives
- Socks for Seniors
- Nursing Home visits
- Letters to prisoners and service people
- Comfort quilts

### **Commendations:**

The team commends the pastor and principal for their efforts to expose the students to tenets of the Catholic Faith through prayer, meditation, liturgy, and service projects.

The team commends the administration and faculty for witnessing in their daily life Gospel values.

The team commends the parents for fostering in their children the value of religious education and witness.

### **Recommendations:**

The team recommends a continued commitment to prayer, meditation, liturgy, and service projects within the schedule of the students.

The team recommends that the administration and faculty investigate updating the Religion texts.

The team recommends that the administration provide for more Bibles in classrooms.

**The team believes the standard is met.**

## **The Leadership and Organization Study**

### **Description:**

- The school is governed using standard diocesan procedure. The Pastor is the leader of the parish educational pyramid. The school Principal reports directly to the pastor. The Principal is responsible for directing all school functions. She is assisted by an administrative assistant, school secretary in addition to faculty support.
- The Pastor's role is to insure the Catholic nature of the school. He and the Principal work closely and plan activities to insure Catholic identity is present in all areas of school life. The principal then assigns faculty members and other staff to various tasks to implement this. Principal and Pastor, Principal and faculty meet at regular weekly and monthly meetings to coordinate all facets of school life.

- The Principal is responsible for working with the Pastor to insure all sacramental, liturgical needs of the students are met. Mass schedules, Reconciliation schedules, and other religious aspects of school are discussed and planned. Faculty members are provided with opportunities for input at regular monthly meetings. Other meetings are scheduled on an as needed basis.
- The pastor and principal meet at bimonthly staff meetings in addition to beginning of year and end of year meetings. School needs are discussed, budgets are worked and staffing decisions are made.
- Periodic surveys of parents, faculty, and staff are used to see what current opinions are. In addition Regular formal evaluations are done. Pastor to Principal, Principal to Faculty, all evaluations are completed in a timely and regular manner.
- The school administrative staff is headed by the Principal. She is responsible for overseeing the day to day administration of all school functions and activities .These include, but are not limited to academic scheduling, liturgy concerns, staff concerns along with interacting with the greater school community. She is assisted by both an administrative assistant and a school secretary. They perform all duties as assigned by the Principal.
- The Principal maintains the religious nature of the school in many ways. In collaboration with the Pastor, she sets school liturgy schedules, determines school sacramental times. In addition she sees that classrooms, halls and physical spaces are decorated in an appropriate faith based way.
- The Principal sees to it that diocesan curriculum guidelines are available to each faculty member. She forwards updates to those guidelines. In addition she updates faculty in a timely manner of any ongoing changes as they occur. Periodically she attends diocesan meetings in which guideline issues are being discussed.
- The Principal evaluates faculty in a regular and timely manner. Throughout the year teachers have both formal and informal evaluations in their classrooms. The Principal also meets both informally throughout the year and formally at year's end with each faculty member.
- The Principal is responsible for two main areas of professional development. First she attends to record keeping assuring that all faculty members update necessary clearances, and required class hours as needed. Second, she is responsible for providing faculty with access to both local in-service training and also informing them of ongoing opportunities for staff development.
- The Pastor evaluates the principal throughout the year. They hold both formal and informal meetings as needed.

- The Principal holds regular monthly faculty meetings, in addition to meeting both before and at the end of school year. These serve to coordinate all activities, solve schedule conflicts, and provide opportunities for faculty interaction .She also meets regularly with Pastor, DRE, and other staff as needed to coordinate all facets of school life.
- The faculty is evaluated formally and informally throughout the year. In addition new faculty members are mentored by experienced teachers as part of the diocesan mentor program.
- Faculty members serve on various committees set up to promote innovation and change in the school. These committees include but are not limited to school advisory board, recruitment and technology.
- Faculty members are all required to keep certification and clearances current. Various professional development opportunities are presented throughout the year.
- All levels of leadership cooperate on many levels. Meetings are held formally both monthly and bi monthly throughout the year. Both the Pastor and Principal serve on the same committees. Teachers also serve in leadership roles. Examples include; heading the recruitment committee, technology development committee, SAP / Special needs committee.
- There are several areas of improvement needed in the leadership process. First, the Pastor needs to be a more visible presence within the school community. Spending time in the classrooms helps foster a connection between the school and its parish. Second, a more formal program to assist new staff, especially brand new teachers is needed. This is directly related to the need for a more centralized communication system. While all areas of the school develop good programs, at times the programs and process clash and create schedule issues and unnecessary frustration.

**Commendations:**

1. The visiting team commends the regularity of the meetings held among all members of the leadership team.
2. The visiting team commends both the pastor and principal for being people of passion and commitment to their mission.
3. The visiting team commends the faculty for their dedication and commitment to Saint Bernadette School.

**Recommendations:**

1. The visiting team recommends that all members of the leadership team work on coordinating the logistics of the program through better communication.
2. The visiting team recommends that the staff try to find more time to communicate in small department meetings and to find better ways to communicate with other departments.
3. The visiting team recommends that all departments work together when “change” is occurring to provide maximum lead time to allow for changes to run smoothly.

**MSA STANDARD 2: GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP**

The school is chartered, licensed, or authorized by a state, nation, or authority that operates in the public interest. The governance and leadership ensure the integrity, effectiveness, and reputation of the school through the establishment of policy, provision of resources, and assurance of a quality educational program. The governance and leadership act ethically and consistently to assure an atmosphere of mutual respect and purposeful effort on behalf of students and their learning. School leaders foster a productive environment for teaching and learning, timely and open communication with stakeholders, and the vision necessary for day-to-day operations and long-term planning.

**The team believes the standard is met.**

**MSA STANDARD 6: SCHOOL CLIMATE AND ORGANIZATION**

The school’s organizational structure and climate facilitate achievement of its core values as expressed in the philosophy/mission. The school culture supports successful implementation of age and developmentally appropriate educational programs and services. Roles, responsibilities, expectations, and reporting relationships are clearly defined. Administrative, instructional, and support staff are qualified, competent, and sufficient in number to effectively provide quality educational experiences. The school regularly conducts staff performance appraisals and offers professional development opportunities informed by its philosophy/mission. Relationships among the staff and leadership are collegial and collaborative.

**Comments:**

The faculty and staff of St. Bernadette School are dedicated to incorporating the mission statement into the daily interaction between all the members of the school community. Communication channels between the principal and the faculty are both formal and informal. The faculty meets regularly in department meetings and entire faculty meetings are held on half-days.

Communication with parents regarding school events is done through a weekly mailing sent home with the students called the *Tuesday Express*. A newsletter is included monthly. Teachers at all grade levels report progress of students to parents use RVS Gradebook. Conference days are scheduled throughout the school year to communicate individual student progress with respective parents. [www.schoolnotes.com](http://www.schoolnotes.com) is used to communicate daily and weekly scheduled events including daily homework assignments and upcoming tests.

Generally the students are grouped for learning by grade level. There are two classes for each grade level K through 8. One teacher teaches the Language Arts block and other grade level teacher teaches Math, Social Studies and Science. The students are with each teacher for approximately half of the school day.

Yearly goals for incorporating the school's philosophy, mission and beliefs are determined both with total school and departmentally. Daily meditation by the homeroom teacher assists in creating a clamming, nurturing environment.

#### **Commendations:**

- 1 The visiting team commends St. Bernadette School for their dedication to incorporating the mission statement into the daily interactions of the entire school community.
- 2 The visiting team commends St. Bernadette School for the various modes of communication used among the staff and between the school and home including RVS Gradebook and Schoolnotes.
- 3 The visiting team commends St. Bernadette School administration and faculty for their commitment to professional and curriculum development.

#### **Recommendations:**

- 1 The visiting team recommends that the mentoring program be incorporated for all new hires to St. Bernadette School to facilitate a much smoother transition for teachers and allow the students a more seamless instructional process.
- 2 The visiting team recommends that St. Bernadette faculty continue to attend professional development workshops that directly impact their needs.
- 3 The visiting team recommends that St. Bernadette School continue to increase the incorporation of Gospel values into the curriculum.

**The team believes the standard is met.**

## **The Resources Study**

### **Description:**

- St. Bernadette School has: a state of the art computer lab with 29 Internet capable computers; a Smart Board with a wireless laptop is also accessible for student as well as faculty use.
- The classrooms are equipped with one Internet ready computer as well as additional computers for curricular related student use.
- Each wing (3) of our building has a portable Smart Board with laptop for additional classroom use.
- For additional instructional use the school library also has a mounted Smart Board with laptop and an additional ELMO for overhead magnification.
- The majority of the building is Wi-Fi accessible
- Librarians are available for individual student and teacher assistance.
- Pre-school through eighth grade have weekly scheduled times for library use.
- Daily announcements (AM/PM), School Notes (website for daily/weekly classroom assignments), RVS grade book, Weekly communication envelope for parents (Tuesday Express), monthly newsletter, monthly student newspaper for school wide distribution are all ways St. Bernadette School communicates with the students and families.

### **Commendations:**

1. The visiting team commends the state of the art computer lab and the expertise of the computer teacher in the use of the equipment.
2. The visiting team commends that the school is Wi-Fi accessible
3. The visiting team commends the vast resources available at St. Bernadette School.

### **Recommendations:**

1. The visiting team recommends getting a new server to help with the computer access in the building.
2. The visiting team recommends a computer and Smart Board as desired for both the Art and Music rooms.
3. The visiting team recommends the addition of a computerized card catalog along with upgraded computers for student research in the library.

## **MSA STANDARD 12: INFORMATION RESOURCES AND TECHNOLOGY**

Information resources, materials, and technology are accessible and of adequate scope, quantity, and quality to facilitate the school's pursuit of its total educational program. These resources encourage all students and staff to broaden and extend their knowledge and skills. Access to

appropriate information resources and technology is provided for students and staff. Appropriate instruction is offered to develop student and staff inquiry, research, and information literacy skills. Information technology equipment is functional and well maintained.

**The team believes the standard is met.**

## **FACILITIES**

### **Description:**

Saint Bernadette School was constructed in 1957. Building renovations have continued through 2010 with the newest construction just being completed in time for the 2010-2011 school years. The building is clean, well maintained and safe. The physical environment supports delivery of the educational program and services as well as optimal student development and achievement. Facilities are regularly inspected for effective operation and meet all applicable laws including safety and health code regulations.

### **Commendations:**

1. The visiting team commends the principal and staff for providing appropriate facilities and equipment that are appropriate for achieving the school's philosophy, mission and beliefs.
2. The visiting team commends the principal and staff for providing both external and internal security and safety procedures.
3. The visiting team commends the principal and staff for having in place funds that secure the regular preventive measures, repairs and maintenance of its facilities and equipment.

### **Recommendations:**

- 1 The visiting team recommends that the principal and staff research an emergency phone/buzzer system for two way emergency communication between the classroom and the office.
2. The visiting team recommends that principal, staff and maintenance personnel investigate the ability to provide better lighting throughout the hallways, as feasibly possible with existing funding.
3. The visiting team recommends that the principal study the possibility for installing a Video-monitoring system of all doorways that is not visible to the office.

## **MSA STANDARD 5: FACILITIES**

School facilities are safe, clean, and well maintained. The physical environment supports delivery of the educational program/services as well as optimal student development and achievement. Facilities are appropriate and adequate to implement the philosophy/mission of the school. They are regularly inspected for effective operation and meet all applicable laws including health and safety code requirements.

**The team believes the standard is met.**

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

### **Description:**

A safe, orderly and healthy environment for teaching and learning is provided. The school adheres to local, state and federal government health and safety requirements. Health, safety, preventive/emergency procedures, and crisis management policies are clearly written, well documented, implemented and updated regularly.

### **Commendations:**

1. The visiting team commends the principal and staff for devising and employing a plan for the safe arrival and dismissal of all students.
2. The visiting team commends the principal and staff for promoting opportunities for students to develop knowledge, attitudes, and practices necessary for personal wellness and a healthy lifestyle.
3. The visiting team commends the principal and staff for incorporating safe practices for the storage, distribution and administration of medications for students.

### **Recommendations:**

1. The visiting team recommends that a clean and sanitary environment continue to be maintained throughout the school.
2. The visiting team recommends that the principal takes the necessary steps to ensure that the staff is kept up to date on the relevant health, wellness and safety information and practices as pertains to all students in the school.
3. The visiting team recommends that the principal and staff continue researching even more ways to insure an effective system for controlling the access to the school by visitors and non-school personnel.

## **MSA STANDARD 7: HEALTH AND SAFETY**

A safe, orderly, and healthy environment for teaching and learning is provided. The school adheres to local, state, and federal government health and safety requirements. Health, safety, preventive/emergency procedures, and crisis management policies are clearly written, well documented, implemented, and updated regularly.

**The team believes the standard is met.**

### **Finances**

#### **Description:**

The Finance Committee of St. Bernadette Parish oversees the school's finances under the direction of the pastor and with input from the principal. The committee meets regularly to review the current financial statements and reports provided to the Diocese. The principal attends all meetings. The principal prepares the budget for the school and oversees all fundraising for the school. Tuition and fundraising accounts are collected and managed by the school administration. Periodic audits by the Diocese are conducted and the school responds appropriately. An annual financial statement is provided to the parishioners detailing the operating income and expenses of the school.

The total percentage of income from tuition and general fundraising has increased over the past five years. Enrollment has remained stable over the past five years with an increase this past year contributing to the financial stability. Recent construction of the Lourdes Center and additional classrooms has added to the operational and maintenance expenses, however they are significant marketing attributes.

#### **Commendations:**

1. The visiting team commends the pastor and St. Bernadette Parish for its commitment to St. Bernadette School evident in parish subsidy and the finance committee support.
2. The visiting team commends St. Bernadette PTG and the administration for the fundraising initiatives that assist the school to meet its financial obligations.
3. The visiting team commends the School Advisory Council for efforts to obtain EITC tax credits to benefit the financial aid fund for the students.

**Recommendations:**

1. The visiting team recommends that fundraising percentages continue to increase and efforts to keep tuition affordable remain.
2. The visiting team recommends the forming of an Advancement Committee to assist in enrollment management and marketing the school in the community.
3. The visiting team recommends that additional efforts to procure resources through development activities, grants, foundations and other partnerships be added to the school's strategic planning.

**MSA STANDARD 4: FINANCES**

Financial resources are sufficient to provide the educational opportunities defined in the school's philosophy/mission. The business practices of the school are ethical. These practices promote confidence in the school's ability to manage fiscal and material resources in a responsible manner and follow prescribed budgeting and accounting principles. The majority of resources raised for school purposes are dedicated to the school's operations.

**Comments:**

St. Bernadette School implements written financial policies and procedures that are in accordance with accepted practices for the Diocese of Pittsburgh. The governance and leadership exercise prudent control over all financial operations of St. Bernadette School.

**The team believes the standard is met.**

**The Planning Study****Description:**

After discussion as a group, the faculty brainstormed to set goals for Middle States. A selected group of teachers met to develop several school-wide goals. The goals were then presented to the entire faculty for approval.

- Christian meditation is expected to provide students an inner calm that would lessen their stress levels and cut down on aggressive relationships.
- Increasing the pairing of Elementary students with Middle and Junior High students to enhance the school community by building relationship within St. Bernadette. The "buddy" system makes the St. Bernadette community more welcoming.

- Work to improve environmental awareness and care for the planet helps students to be stewards on the environment.
- Increasing the pursuit of technology through additional computer lab time to work on Criterion Writing and Math Street for the students' classroom success.
- Increased use of Smart Boards by teachers and students to enhance learning.

**Commendations:**

1. The visiting team commends the administration, faculty and student body for embracing the practice of Christian meditation to secure inner calm in the individual.
2. The visiting team commends efforts by the administration and faculty to enhance the spirit of community by providing opportunities to build relationships throughout the school by instituting the buddy system.
3. The visiting team commends the efforts of the administration, faculty and student body to instill environmental awareness and care of the planet.
4. The visiting team commends the administration and faculty for implementing technology effectively into the educational process of the school especially in adding Criterion Writing and Math Street into their curriculum.
5. The visiting team commends the increased use of Smart Board by teachers and students to increase avenues of resources available in the teaching process.

**Recommendations:**

1. The visiting team recommends that the administration, faculty, and student body continue the practice of Christian Meditation.
2. The visiting team recommends that the administration and faculty continue and encourage the building of relationships within the school community through the buddy system.
3. The visiting team recommends the administration and faculty to explore other avenues in the wide community to aid in having the student body be aware of global environmental issues.
4. The visiting team recommends the administration provide continued in-service for faculty to ensure effective use of the Smart Board.
5. The visiting team recommends the faculty continue to explore use of Smart Boards in their curriculum.

### **MSA STANDARD 3: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING**

The school uses a collaborative process to develop and implement a written strategic or long-range plan to improve its educational program and services. Plans are aligned with the school's philosophy/mission and its operational plans, and are focused on continuous improvement of student performance, staff professional and organizational growth.

**The team believes the standard is met.**

#### **Summary and Closure:**

The team agreed on the following strengths, but not limited to, the St. Bernadette School:

- The efforts of the administration and faculty to foster religious and educational learning.
- The implementation of Christian Meditation to foster inner calm within the School Community.
- The efforts to further implementation of technology into the curriculum.

The team agreed on the following points that appeared as needs for St. Bernadette School

- To address immediately the need to up-grade the computer server to ensure continuity in the educational process.
- To continue to procure technology to enhance the learning process in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- To form an Advancement committee to promote marketing and assist in enrollment management.

## **MAINTAINING THE MOMENTUM**

### **Annual & Mid-Point Reviews**

When the Middle States Association accredits an educational institution, it does so with the understanding that the school will live up to its commitment to make a good-faith effort of implementing its goals. It is not acceptable to place the goals on the shelf and forget about them until the next Middle States Visit.

Many experienced educators have found that the self-study process, during which the mission and beliefs, community needs, and the school's operations and programs were reviewed, is the easier part of the continuous improvement process. The hard work comes after the school improvement plan has been developed and the visiting team has come and gone.

Because each school is unique, there is no single set of recommendations that can be made as to how the community can sustain its momentum for improvement over the entire seven-year accreditation cycle. Each school must find its own way to operationalize the improvement process to ensure that institutional growth becomes a part of the existing culture.

For a school to implement its school improvement plan, it must ensure that there is accountability for its implementation. Responsible persons or groups are assigned to oversee and monitor the implementation of the goals and action plans. Each school will assess the amount of time and resources required for implementing the plans.

A major element of a culture of continuous improvement is regularly and formally reviewing the school's progress toward achieving their goals. The importance of maintaining an awareness of and commitment to the improvement plan cannot be understated. Schools that address the need for systematic, systemic and ongoing review of its action plans build a framework, which supports sustained energy for strategies aimed at school improvement.

As one of the requirements for maintaining accreditation, Middle States requires schools to conduct a formal progress review at least once annually. However, most schools have found that more frequent reviews are needed.

A Mid-Point Review must be submitted to Middle States by October 15<sup>th</sup>, after the third year the school has received accreditation with the three annual reviews attached.

### **Conducting Annual Reviews**

The persons or groups responsible for monitoring the school's progress and conducting the annual reviews ought to:

- Determine how many reviews are needed and when they should be scheduled.
- Schedule reviews at times when important performance data from administering the assessments are received (student performance goals).

- Ensure there is adequate time to review data, determine what the data means regarding the school's progress; receive reports regarding the implementation of the action plans; and determine what, if any, revisions need to be made to the action plans.
- Determine how the school will celebrate the successes it has achieved.

It is recommended that those responsible establish a format for recording data and progress over the life of the plan. Tables or charts frequently help to organize information and allow an “at-a-glance” view of progress over time. Graphic representations are helpful in presenting annual review results to various members of the school community in a visual, easy-to-understand format.

Performance data (in relation to the school's student performance goal(s)) should indicate whether the implemented strategies and action steps are producing the desired changes in student performance. The annual review provides the opportunity to update the plan with newly identified strategies; to delete and delay strategies that have not proven effective or have yet to be implemented; and to indicate which strategies are completed or in process. Those responsible can document additional steps taken to address the goals, or develop a short narrative summary of progress since the last review.

## **Communicating with School Community Members**

Those responsible for monitoring the school's progress must ensure a regular stream of communications with school community members regarding the plan implementation and the progress made. Community members need to be informed and involved. Their input may be sought and their ideas and energies incorporated into the school's improvement efforts. The school's mission and beliefs, goals and action plans ought to be communicated regularly. Some ideas for communicating include:

- The school's mission and belief statements should be widely decimated on a regular basis
- Include a summary of progress toward the school's improvement plan during open houses, conferences, and parent-teacher and board meetings. Vivid graphic representation is easily understood and can effectively highlight areas of progress.
- Continue to include a regular progress update on the agenda for faculty meetings.
- Use the school's website to demonstrate progress on the school's improvement plan.
- Following each review, develop strategies to communicate the results to the faculty, students, parents, board/trustees, and community members.

## The Mid-Point Review / Visit

- All schools with **Initial Accreditation** will be required to complete a **Mid-Point Review** and host a **Mid-Point Visit**. The report submitted by the school should be 1) complete, 2) show evidence the school has conducted the annual reviews--please attach them to the Mid-Point Report, and 3) show evidence of faithful implementation of the strategic plan for growth and improvement. Mid-Point Review is due into the Middle States office by October 15<sup>th</sup>. This visit will be conducted at no cost to the school.
- Schools that hold **Re-Accreditation** status will submit the **Mid-Point Review** to Middle States by October 15<sup>th</sup>
- Upon receiving the school's report, it will be reviewed by the Middle States staff. If 1) the report is complete, 2) the report shows evidence the school has conducted the annual reviews-- please attach them to the Mid-Point Report, 3) the report shows evidence of faithful implementation of the strategic plan for growth and improvement, and 4) there are no monitoring or other issues noted in the Team Report that require an onsite visit, the Middle States staff will notify the school that an onsite **Mid-Point Visit** is **not required**. However, if a school wishes to receive the feedback and input that can be obtained by an outside reviewer; the school may request to host a one-day Mid-Point Visit. The school will then be responsible for the travel expenses of the reviewer.
- Schools that were given **Accreditation with Stipulations** or **Probationary Accreditation** status will be required to complete the **Mid-Point Review** and host a **Mid-Point Visit**. This visit will be conducted at no cost to the school.
- If a school's **Mid-Point Review** indicates that 1) the report is not complete, and/or 2) the report does not show the school is conducting annual reviews, and/or 3) the report does not show evidence of faithful implementation of the strategic plan for growth and improvement, and/or 4) there are monitoring or other issues noted in the Team Report that require an onsite visit, the Middle States staff will notify the school that an onsite **Mid-Term Visit** is **required**. The school will be responsible for the cost of hosting the Mid-Point Visitor.

Therefore, schools that have just completed their 3<sup>rd</sup> year annual review will be required to submit the Mid-Point Review with the three Annual Reviews attached by October 15<sup>th</sup>. The Middle States staff will then analyze the Mid-Point Review to determine if a Mid-Point Visit is required or not and will notify the school as to that decision. Required Mid-Point Visits will be scheduled for the spring.

School Year	Mid-Point Review	Middle States Review	Required Mid-Point Visits
2010-2011	October 15, 2010	January 15, 2011	Spring 2011
2011-2012	October 15, 2011	January 15, 2012	Spring 2012
2012-2013	October 15, 2012	January 15, 2013	Spring 2013 and so on.....

## **The Mid-Point Visit**

If an onsite **Mid-Point Visit** is either required or requested, the Reviewer will seek to confirm that there is evidence and data provided by the school in the Mid-Point Report. In addition, the Reviewer will provide feedback and support for the school's efforts in a written report.

In addition to the evidence that the school is developing a culture of planning and continuous review, the Reviewer looks for evidence that progress is being made in achieving the goals set in the student performance objectives as well as the other goals established by the school in the action plan of the self-study. The Reviewer seeks to validate, motivate, and provide assistance to the school by examining the evidence of progress. As the protocols names imply, *Designing the Future*, *Renewing the Vision*, and *Project*, the reviewer looks for evidence of growth and improvement that is moving the school toward the future and giving vision toward what is ahead. In Summary, the Mid-Point Review and/or Visit seeks to ensure that planning in the school is a continuous process, not one that occurs every seven years.

## Middle States Annual Review and Mid-Point Review

*Please utilize the following format when writing the Annual Reviews stressing the actions and accomplishments that occurred during that particular year (Year 1,2,3). The Mid-Point Review is to be a more comprehensive inclusive summary of the actions taken and accomplishments made since the team visit in light of the goals set in the Strategic Plan. The Mid-Point Review is to conclude with a summary statement which includes an overview of the necessary and planned actions and timeline looking ahead for the next three years that will reflect continuous growth and improvement--maintaining the momentum.*

School:

Address:

Phone:

Principal/Director:

Annual Review for Year \_\_\_\_ Completion Date:

1. Describe and analyze the current status of the school:
  - Demographic and/or school enrollment changes
  - Major organizational changes
  - Major curriculum changes
  - Major changes that relate to any of the Middle States Standards for Accreditation
2. List the school's original goals:
3. List the persons, by name and title responsible for conducting the annual review:
4. Explain the process used for conducting the annual review.
5. Describe the process used for collecting data, and information on the efforts to achieve each goal.

6. Describe and analyze of the collected data and information related to each goal.
7. For each goal, identify strategies that were determined to be effective.
8. For each goal, identify strategies that were determined to be ineffective.
9. Identify changes that were made in the original goals or action plans.
10. Identify goals that have been successfully completed.
11. Identify any goals that were abandoned. Provide reasons for abandonment.
12. When original goals have been achieved or abandoned, new goals and action plans need to be developed. The MSCESS format for the new goals and action plans shall be utilized.

Goal Statement:

<b>Major Event and Timeline</b>	<b>Collateral Event and Timeline</b>	<b>Required Resources</b>	<b>Title or Positions of People Responsible for Implementation</b>	<b>Title or Positions of People Responsible for Assessing Progress</b>	<b>Date of Assessing Progress</b>	<b>Measurement Criteria</b>

A similar chart must be developed for each goal.

**\*\*Mid-Point Summary---“Looking Ahead” – Please include a summary statement which includes an overview of the necessary and planned actions and timeline looking ahead for the next three years that will reflect continuous growth and improvement---maintaining the momentum.**

July 26, 2010