Catholic Identity
ASSESSMENT
PROCESS

Diocese of
St. Petersburg

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**Introduction**

The Gospel imperative to go forth and teach has resounded through the centuries in the hearts of Catholic educators. These men and women of faith, both lay and vowed religious, have worked tirelessly to bring the Gospel to God’s children sometimes against monumental political and cultural odds.

Throughout their history, Catholic Schools have maintained a strong culture for learning that is rooted in the Church. It is what has come to be known as “Catholic Identity.”

For Catholic Schools, values, goals and protocols have been intrinsically bound by the beliefs and traditions of the Catholic Church. The Church has always provided, and continues to provide, a solid foundation for the building of a community of faith in Catholic Schools.

With the changing socio-political climate in America, what were once clear givens in Catholic Schools have become blurred. It is certainly time to rebuild the Catholic vision in Catholic Schools.

Clearly the fundamental nature and purpose of Catholic Schools has never changed. The challenge has always been to maintain a strong ecclesial identity and at the same time be integrated into a new cultural context in the contemporary world. In doing so, those involved in Catholic Schools must be mindful that their school’s Catholic Identity is basic to its existence. The Catholic Identity of Catholic Schools in this moment of history must be stronger than ever before. It is a time of a new Pentecost; a time to recapture the energy of the Gospel for the good of the people of God in the 21st century.

The Diocese of St. Petersburg, recognizing the need for ensuring the Catholic Identity of its schools, appointed a committee of Catholic School administrators to research and ultimately produce a process for the assessment of Catholic Identity within each school.

Each Catholic School in the Diocese of St. Petersburg will proceed through a self-assessment process as follows:

**Components of the Assessment Process for Catholic Identity**

1. **Introduction of Assessment Process to Pastor / Faculty / Staff / Parents / Students**

2. **Pastor(s) and Principal complete the assessment instrument collaboratively**
   (for high schools: Board of Trustees with High School Administrator)

3. **Distribution and completion of assessment instrument.**
   The following constituents will participate:
   - School Advisory Board
   - Teachers
   - Staff
   - Parents
   - Students
   - Parish Community
   - Community Stockholders
(4) School compiles and summarizes data (see summary forms)  
   Principal’s designee and staff

(5) General discussion on school’s Catholic Identity  
   Pastor & Associate Superintendent  
   (for high schools: Board of Trustees)

(6) Evidentiary Interview based on standards and identification of strengths and weaknesses  
   Associate Superintendent with Principal

(7) Goal setting and creation of Action Plan  
   Principal & Faculty

(8) Submitting of Goals and Action Plan to Superintendent & Associate Superintendent  
   Principal

(9) Approval of Goals/Action Plan  
   Superintendent

(10) 3 year review of Goals/Action Plan with Executive Summary of progress  
    Principal & Faculty  
    Principal & Associate Superintendent

(11) Repeat Process

The framework for the self-assessment process consists of Elements, Standards and Indicators.

Elements define Catholic Identity for schools and serve as the foundational piece on which the standards and indicators rest. They flow from several sources including “The Holy See’s Teaching on Catholic Schools,” The Congregation for Catholic Education’s, “The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium,” “To Teach As Jesus Did” and many other resources.

Standards represent all the necessary structures, policies, procedures, dispositions, goals and processes that must be present for a Catholic School to have and maintain all the elements of Catholic Identity.

Indicators are the observable descriptors for each standard. These will provide schools with a solid foundation for assessment as well as a basis for initiating change and for future planning.
CATHOLIC IDENTITY ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

Five Goals with Standards---

I. A Vision Beyond the Here and Now

Standards:
A) Leadership recognizes the importance of the formation of the whole child and “seeks to fix his/her eyes on heaven.” (The Catholic School p. 29)
B) Leadership clearly articulates and models a Catholic vision.
C) The mission statement clearly embodies a transcendent vision.

II. Life in Christ

Standards:
A) The school recognizes the need for forming children in all their dimensions as images of God (Gen. 1:26-27 Holy See p. 22)
B) The school is inspired by the Gospel and Christ as teacher.

III. Genuine Community of Faith

Standards:
A) The school clearly reflects that it is firmly grounded in the Catholic Church.
B) The school recognizes parents as the primary educators of their children.
C) The interaction between students and teachers reflects a mutual respect and a dynamic sense of belonging to the community.

IV. “Spirit of Catholicism” Permeates the Entire Curriculum

Standards:
A) All curriculum is guided and inspired by the Gospel and the teachings of the Church.

Indicators:
1. The school logo reflects Catholic identity.
2. Catholic symbols are visible throughout the school campus.
B) Priority is given to the integration of faith and culture.
C) Students are prepared for a “fully human life at the service of others and for the life of the world to come.” (Holy See)

V. Gospel Witness of the Entire School Staff

Standards:
A) Teachers and staff understand their vocation as Catholic educators.

Indicators:
1. Ongoing professional development in faith formation is provided for teachers and staff.
2. Personnel participate in the faith community in their respective parishes.
The assessment process is designed to be an instrument of self-discovery and growth for Catholic Schools. It is intended to empower pastors, administrators, Boards and all stakeholders to effect and participate in positive change.

As schools proceed through this process over the years, it is hoped that they will be in an ongoing mode of celebrating their identity as part of the Catholic Church which authenticates that identity. Most importantly, it is hoped that this experience will reinforce the Catholic School’s identity as, in the words of Pope Benedict XIV, “a place to encounter the living God who in Christ Jesus, reveals his transforming love.” (April 7, 2008 address to Catholic educators in Washington D.C.)