



North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), and the Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation (CITA) are accreditation divisions of AdvancED.

Standards Assessment Report

Saint Jude School (SB)

19657 Hildebrand Street South Bend, Indiana 46614

Prepared for the AdvancED Quality Assurance Review

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Standards Assessment Report

Contents

Introduction & Purpose of the Report	3
Demographics	5
Standard 1. Vision and Purpose	6
Standard 2. Governance and Leadership	11
Standard 3. Teaching and Learning	17
Standard 4. Documenting and Using Results	24
Standard 5. Resource and Support Systems	29
Standard 6. Stakeholder Communications and Relationships	35
Standard 7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement	39
Conclusion	44

Introduction & Purpose of the Report

Introduction

The Standards Assessment Report is designed to serve as a valuable self-assessment and as a tool to help schools prepare for their Quality Assurance Review. The report is based on the AdvancED standards, which serve as the foundation of the accreditation process. In order to earn and maintain accreditation, schools must meet the AdvancED standards, engage in a process of continuous improvement, and host a Quality Assurance Review at least once every five years.

The Standards Assessment Report engages the school community in an in-depth assessment of each of the seven AdvancED standards. In completing the report, the school identifies the data, information, evidence, and documented results that validate that it is meeting each standard. This self assessment helps the school identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.

The Standards Assessment Report also serves as the primary resource for the Quality Assurance Review Team, which uses the report to prepare for the visit to the school. The team uses insights gathered from the report and information obtained during the on-site visit to provide feedback to the school and to make an accreditation recommendation.

Structure of the Report

The Standards Assessment Report is organized by the AdvancED standards. For each standard, the report includes four sections: 1) considering the evidence; 2) indicators rubric; 3) focus questions; and 4) overall assessment. Each section reinforces the other sections by asking a question that builds on the prior section.

The section entitled "considering the evidence" allows school personnel to think about the practices and/or processes being implemented and identify evidence that will support its responses to the indicators rubric and focus questions. This section helps school stakeholders engage in a discussion about how it knows it is adhering to the standards. The section is not intended to engage the school in a collection of evidence, but rather in thoughtful dialogue about how it can demonstrate that quality practices, conditions, and results are occurring in the school. The section asks, "What practices/processes are being implemented, and are they effective?" or said another way, "How do we know we are doing what we are doing?"

The indicators rubric enables the school to assess the degree to which practices and/or processes are in place that indicate adherence to the standard and indicators. For each indicator, the school may check if the practices and/or processes are highly functional in the school, operational, emerging, or not evident. The school should use the rubric as an opportunity to ask itself challenging questions and to respond with accurate answers geared toward self-improvement. After completing the rubric, the school can quickly see areas of strength and opportunity. The section asks, "To what degree are the noted practices/processes in place?"

The focus questions allow the school to expand on and think more deeply about the responses to the indicators rubric. The focus questions provide an opportunity for the school to describe the systematic and systemic processes that are in place to support its ability to meet the indicators. The section asks, "How are the

practices/processes implemented?"

The overall assessment describes how well schools are implementing practices and/or processes and the impact these practices and/or processes have on student results and overall school effectiveness. The overall assessment helps schools judge where they are in relation to each standard. The "operational" level is required in order to demonstrate meeting the standard. The section asks, "How well are we meeting the standard overall?"

Demographics

Public/Non-public:	Non-public
School Type:	Elementary
Charter School:	
Enrollment:	165
Gender at School:	Co-Ed
Grade(s):	K,1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8
Location Type:	Suburban
Gender at School:	Co-Ed
Religious Denomination:	Christian - Catholic

Standard 1. Vision and Purpose

STANDARD: The school establishes and communicates a shared purpose and direction for improving the performance of students and the effectiveness of the school.

Impact Statement: A school is successful in meeting this standard when it commits to a shared purpose and direction. The school establishes expectations for student learning aligned with the school's vision that is supported by school personnel and external stakeholders. These expectations serve as the focus for assessing student performance and school effectiveness. The school's vision guides allocations of time and human, material, and fiscal resources.

Indicators Rubric: Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school. The responses to the rubric should help the school identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school's responses to the focus questions and examples of evidence.

Definitions of Indicators Rubric:

Not Evident	Little or no evidence exists
Emerging	Evidence indicates early or preliminary stages of implementation of practice
Operational	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are actively implemented
Highly Functional	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

Indicators: In fulfillment of this standard, the school:

1.1 Establishes a vision for the school in collaboration with its stakeholders:

Highly Functional

1.2 Communicates the vision and purpose to build stakeholder understanding and support:

Operational

1.3 Identifies goals to advance the vision:

Operational

1.4 Develops and continuously maintains a profile of the school, its students, and the community:

Operational

1.5 Ensures that the school's vision and purpose guide the teaching and learning process:

Operational

1.6 Reviews its vision and purpose systematically and revises them when appropriate:

Operational

Focus Questions:

1. What is the process for establishing and building understanding of and commitment to the vision statement among stakeholders?

St. Jude Catholic School is committed to helping our students develop their spiritual, academic, and social potential for success as lifelong learners.

The process of establishing our vision and goals is a two-fold process. Internally, the teachers and administration collaborate to examine student data, to investigate and address the individual needs of students, and to develop programs which are in alignment with the school's mission statement and function as a Catholic institution. The process of constructing and maintaining an improvement plan is the natural result of this cooperative environment.

Externally, the school board represents parents, parishioners, alumni, and other critical stakeholders. They work to view the school in its past, present, and future state. They investigate the broad range of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (through both data analysis and public surveys) that affect what the school is and is not able to accomplish with respect to its internal goals. This lays the framework for a strategic plan which complements the school's academic improvement plan. Collectively, the process results in a shared mission, vision, and core values. These become the foundation for a comprehensive framework for institutional development comprising curriculum (academics), faith, marketing, finance, facilities, technology, and policy, among other areas.

The school's mission is made evident through its publication on school documentation, handbook, letterhead, web site, classrooms, and promotional literature. Students and faculty are expected to know and recite the mission frequently. The school's motto ("Living for Christ, Learning for Life") embodies an even briefer synopsis of the mission statement that catches the attention of the broader community.

The mission and vision of St. Jude is lived through a curriculum and environment that foster high academic standards of achievement, while acknowledging the broad and diverse learning needs of its students; the inclusion of programs that develop learning in its broadest sense (for example through service, fine arts, and physical pursuits); and the acknowledgment that raising students to be balanced, loving, productive adult citizens is our highest priority.

Stakeholders are included in the development of this vision and strategic plan. Organizations from Parish Council, to Home and School Association, Athletics, and School Board, become involved with supporting the many large and small initiatives necessary to enact the strategic goals of the institution. The persons who give of their time, resources, expertise, and care include teachers, staff, parents, parishioners, alumni, and grandparents. In many cases, a person may embody several of those roles at one time. Collectively, their efforts create the St. Jude of yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

2. What is the school's process for developing a profile and systematically maintaining and using information that describes the school, its students, and their performance?

With the implementation of every latest round of improvement goals, the profile is comprehensively reviewed and constructed. This profile includes elements of demographic trends, school environment, survey data, former student data, achievement data, instructional data, and community data. The profile attempts to capture a snapshot of the school in the years leading up to its construction.

While the data from that profile becomes the basis for 'triangulating' academic needs and the genesis of school improvement goals, it is also important to conduct many smaller instruments which monitor and guide changes in the environment, even during the course of that implementation cycle. In other words, while the profile is a launching point, many smaller pieces of data are renewed, reviewed, and updated on an annual basis. Such items as statewide testing scores, diagnostic reading tools, common writing assessments, religious knowledge assessments (ACRE), and bullying surveys are conducted on an annual basis, with the information presented with appropriate stakeholders to discuss, review, and adjust strategies appropriately.

The use of technology greatly assists the process of data collection and analysis. The Survey Monkey website has been used for nearly three years to collect data about student attitudes toward bullying, progress in the knowledge of math facts, writing prompts, and parental surveys. This data can then be looked at from many different angles to discover the most important trends and areas for improvement.

Finally, the website has become a rich source of information and a portal to the broader community. Nearly all publicly accessible forms of information about the school are made present on the website. These include general information and procedures, schedules, order forms, handbook, organizations, alumni contact information, current events, and links to high quality educational resources. The website serves the needs of prospective families looking to know more about the school, its own students, teachers, and administration (as a tool for communication), members of the church, and those who would seek to benefit from emulating the model we have created.

All of these resources, data pieces, and methods of using and communicating that information comprise our commitment to developing and maintaining an active profile of St. Jude Catholic School.

3. How does the leadership ensure that the school's vision, purpose, and goals guide the teaching and learning process?

The leadership of St. Jude Catholic School includes its parish priest or pastor, the principal, lead teacher and assistant principal, and the school board. All of these persons play a role in guiding the teaching and learning process. The school board has only very general oversight over curriculum and instruction. However, as part of its strategic plan, it does set benchmarks for general improvement and creates goals for teacher development and the implementation of technological change. It establishes a broad vision for the growth of a local curriculum framework and maintains the overall mission and vision of the school.

The role of the pastor is to give the principal and school board the freedom to do what it takes to see that the school meets high standards of accreditation, especially with respect to its academic and curricular areas of concern. The pastor nourishes a spiritual community and attracts persons of diverse age and need into the church community. This builds a critical base of stakeholders who contribute the stewardship of 'time, talent, and treasure' that makes it possible to sustain Catholic Education on a high level.

The principal's role is to make sure that teachers are teaching accurate content using methods that have been established in best practice research and literature. Corollary to this is the importance of developing a group of teachers who collaborate and communicate with one another and the administration on a frequent basis. The types of communication necessary to establishing a high quality teaching and learning process include that of school policies; school mission, vision, and improvement goals; to maintain an eye on the activities for implementing those goals and on the methods for achieving them. The principal encourages both formal and informal peer-to-peer collaboration by way of bi-weekly faculty meetings and twice weekly level meetings. Teachers are expected to approach their leveled meetings with clear tasks and purpose. They are to discuss the needs of students, examine the implications of data, review the effectiveness of policies, utilize new technological tools, and report back to the principal about their findings, progress, and decisions.

The lead teacher (elementary grades) and assistant principal (middle school) are key mediators, who both convey messages from the principal and consult with the principal about the needs and concerns of the larger staff. They both plan and preside over the smaller committees and meetings to ensure the management of the school is never in the hands of the principal alone. Instead, teachers and their representative leaders are expected to be owners of the teaching and learning process.

Through all of these methods, the school's leadership ensures that efforts continue to be focused on the broad objectives of the school's visioning as well as the daily details that must be applied in order to see the smaller steps to their fulfillment.

4. What process is used to ensure that the vision and purpose of the school remain current and aligned with the school's expectations for student learning and school effectiveness?

One of the essential qualities of the school's mission statement is that it states a three-fold purpose for the school's existence: to educate students spiritually, academically, and socially. This means that aligning its practices with expectations for learning and effectiveness must adequately address those three areas. In terms of faith, the school board, pastor, and principal work together to maintain a plan for improving the school's Catholic identity. Integration of instruction about religion; practice, worship, devotions, and sacraments; and learning to live lives of service are the results of those efforts. Programs which stray too far from helping students appreciate their place in a school based in faith will have less traction than those which promote it. Even non-Catholic students, for instance, seek out an education that accepts and recognizes the importance of acknowledging the role of God and faith in everyday life.

Academically, the school community has debated and acted upon what is most realistic to accomplish. We do not have the funding and resources to serve students with severe and profound disabilities. What we can do, however, is employ persons and programs that can make reasonable accommodation for students with the most common and moderate forms of medical or learning disability. A full time resource teacher, a resource aid, mentoring program, general intervention process, and consultation support from the South Bend schools, are examples of how this is accomplished. On the other end of the spectrum, while we cannot realistically ask that our students would be accepted by passing a rigorous course of exams. Not only would we not be able to maintain a funding model based on accepting the highest achieving students, it would be contrary to our mission of educating a broad and diverse spectrum of learners. However, through programs such as our gifted opportunities program and the design of a curriculum designed to challenge students at any level, we expect to raise the standard of achievement at all grades and levels.

The social aspect of the school's mission ties with our commitment to developing students who succeed as lifelong learners. A desire to create a positive social environment and to encourage students to embrace a wide variety of interests and abilities is reflected in our development of the electives program. Elective courses are tied to curriculum areas, but present them to students in ways that take them out of the traditional classroom setting. Examples of such courses include band, choir, drama, art and technology, study habits, personal finance, problem solving, faith & service, yearbook, 8th grade video, games, knitting, Friday PE, and Friday study hall. In elementary grades, the addition of a program designed to integrate instruction in mathematical standards with the game of chess is another manifestation of this focus on social development and lifelong learning. Even in the realm of extracurricular learning, we will begin training athletic coaches in a program that discusses coaching as a ministry, in order to promote an athletic program that has the best spiritual and social needs of our students at its core.

In summary, St. Jude recognizes that the core of its mission is very straightforward. We do not seek to evaluate our school's effectiveness based on standards which are unrealistic, contradictory to, or not somehow embodied

within the essence of that statement. While there can be both financial and quality risks in overextending, St. Jude actively discusses and evaluates programs based on what it can do that will be most well received by students and lead to the most effective results, within the broad parameters of what it seeks to become.

Overall Assessment:

Operational: The school has committed to a shared purpose and direction. The school has clearly defined expectations for student learning aligned with the school's vision that is supported by school personnel and external stakeholders. These expectations serve as the focus for assessing student performance and school effectiveness. The school's vision guides allocations of time and human, material, and fiscal resources. The preponderance of the evidence supports an overall assessment of "operational" and is substantiated in the responses to the Indicators Rubric.

Standard 2. Governance and Leadership

STANDARD: The school provides governance and leadership that promote student performance and school effectiveness.

Impact Statement: A school is successful in meeting this standard when it has leaders who are advocates for the school's vision and improvement efforts. The leaders provide direction and allocate resources to implement curricular and co-curricular programs that enable students to achieve expectations for their learning. Leaders encourage collaboration and shared responsibility for school improvement among stakeholders. The school's policies, procedures, and organizational conditions ensure equity of learning opportunities and support for innovation.

Indicators Rubric: Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school. The responses to the rubric should help the school identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school's responses to the focus questions and examples of evidence.

Definitions of Indicators Rubric:

Not Evident	Little or no evidence exists
Emerging	Evidence indicates early or preliminary stages of implementation of practice
Operational	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are actively implemented
Highly Functional	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

Indicators: In fulfillment of this standard, the school operates under the jurisdiction of a governing board that:

2.1 Establishes policies and procedures that provide for the effective operation of the school:

Highly Functional

2.2 Recognizes and preserves the executive, administrative, and leadership prerogatives of the administrative head of the school:

Highly Functional

2.3 Ensures compliance with applicable local, state, and federal laws, standards, and regulations:

Operational

Indicators: In fulfillment of this standard, the school has leadership that:

2.4 Employs a system that provides for analysis and review of student performance and school effectiveness:

Operational

2.5 Fosters a learning community:

Operational

2.6 Provides teachers and students opportunities to lead:

Highly Functional

2.7 Provides stakeholders meaningful roles in the decision-making process that promote a culture of participation, responsibility, and ownership:

Highly Functional

2.8 Controls curricular and extracurricular activities that are sponsored by the school:

Operational

2.9 Responds to community expectations and stakeholder satisfaction:

Operational

2.10 Implements an evaluation system that provides for the professional growth of all personnel:

Operational

Focus Questions:

1. What is the process for establishing, communicating, and implementing policies and procedures for the effective operation of the school?

Policies generally emerge through one of three methods. First, the most effective and proactive approach is one that looks ahead to a need and seeks to address it in a manner that is carefully studied and discussed with all stakeholders. A perfect example was the school's policy about extracurricular eligibility. The need for such a policy was articulated and introduced to the Athletic Association (one of the groups that would be most affected by the policy) early on. A full year was taken to put the policy into a written form. The draft policy was introduced and discussed by the Athletic Board. A second year was taken to pilot the policy and make sure that the school's data management system was capable of handling the types of reporting needed to implement it. It was finally implemented in its third year, where additional results and feedback resulted in slight modifications for the next year.

A second means is for the school board to raise an issue or policy that needs to be addressed. The school board understands that policies are broad statements of intention, and not specific directives. Such a policy was implemented three years ago stating that the school needed to establish a more transparent hiring process for non-certified personnel that included a period of internal posting so that all members of the community had a chance to recognize an opportunity to apply for that position. School board policies are considered 'advisory,' however it is the prerogative of the pastor only if he determines that a policy will not benefit the school's advancement despite the best research and majority opinion of the board.

A final means by which policy comes about is important is through internal discussion and continual revision. This is when a problem occurs that the administration and faculty realize needs to be addressed or because the desired result of a policy did not yield the expected results. For instance, it became clear that students in the middle school were experiencing a different set of academic expectations from different teachers. The teachers themselves, with the principal's blessing, constructed a set of testing and grading policies that would represent a consistent standard. These policies were then implemented through the school's Handbook (in a private school setting, considered the most important legal contract). After a year, it became evident that certain aspects of the policy did not have the desired effect on student responsibility with respect to homework and test preparation, so

teachers again initiated a process of revision that will hopefully find the correct balance of accommodation to learning and consequences for failing to live up to academic expectations.

Policies at St. Jude come from both top down, by way of the school board's oversight and from bottom up as teachers seek consistent methods of maintaining a safe and effective school. The school board has the ability to comment on the overall consistency of the handbook while the administration and teachers have the ability to develop the daily implementation and revision of broad policies. Together, these approaches compliment and support one another for effective school operation.

2. What process does the school's leadership use to evaluate school effectiveness and student performance?

School leadership organizations and school administration conduct a process of continuous assessment and review of strategic and curricular goals. The school board spent the duration of nearly a year doing its evaluation of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The data necessary for this SWOT analysis included factual and statistical data as well as survey and observational considerations. A one day focus meeting was held involving members of the school board, the parish community, the local community, and the University of Notre Dame, who reviewed the data collected and identified key points for action. From the conversations and discussions at the focus meeting, the board identified 5 central areas for attention which became the pillars for the strategic plan. Each year, the board conducts a review in the fall to determine overall progress toward reaching the goals elicited in the strategic plan. On an annual or bi-annual basis, the school board intends to use a survey process with the community, in addition to other school data provided by the principal, to determine whether or not its goals are still relevant to the schools needs and whether they are leading to effective change.

Within the school, the principal holds conversations with the faculty and staff--through large group faculty meetings, committees, and weekly leveled meetings--to gauge progress toward specific aspects of the improvement plan in terms of policy, curriculum, student needs, improvement goals, and other priorities. The process of requiring engagement from the faculty is what helps convey the importance that student achievement must have above other interests. The activities and measurements used to direct the school's improvement efforts have been steadily revised to reflect the changing realities and needs of the situation. Timelines are adjusted if it becomes clear that an intervention can be implemented more or less quickly than initially thought.

The principal is able to take quantitative data such as test scores and provide more detailed disaggregated analyses that can be shared with teachers. The ability to conduct basic data analysis can be helpful identifying more subtle patterns than simply the number of students who do or do not pass a given test. We have also uncovered both small differentials in achievement (such as the fact that returning students slightly outperform students who are new to the school) as well as gaping disparities (females outperforming males by a wide margin in language arts) that allow us to make better decisions about our improvement goals and efforts.

Even on the level of individual students, being able to conduct processes such as a general education intervention or an individualized behavior plan can help identify reasons why a particular student is struggling and ways that this student can be supported. Following the grades for students throughout the course of a year can show when efforts like these lead to substantial improvement. Examples of this have been seen where a student once labeled with a specific learning disability in reading now regularly achieves As and Bs. A student who was once at risk of failing or not passing his grade was not found to suffer from a learning disability, but through close communication with his parents, mentoring program, positive reinforcement, and the assurance that the school was not going to kick him out after all, the student was able to finish the year with significant gains in his grades and GPA. We know that he has a long way to go, but he clearly responded to efforts to make his educational experience more successful.

In summary, the school's leadership utilizes broad organizations and groups of stakeholders to examine large

trends of school effectiveness--not only in terms of academics, but financial, social, spiritual, and in terms of the overall experience. At the same time, the administration also empowers the teachers themselves to investigate pieces of data and to respond in both systematic and unconventional ways to help all students, groups of students, and even single individuals reach a level of accomplishment that had not been previously seen.

3. In what ways are stakeholders, including staff, given opportunities to provide leadership and to contribute to the decision-making process?

As mentioned earlier, teachers have a representative in the form of an assistant principal and a lead teacher. These persons help convey and share primary objectives and ideas with their colleagues at both middle school and elementary levels. They also serve as a liaison to the principal in terms of gathering responses and answering questions they may have about things as basic as personnel policies. The teachers are expected to hold bi-weekly meetings that are integrated into the school's schedule for common meeting times in the upper and lower grades. Specialty teachers, librarians, and other electives teachers are included in these conversations whenever necessary. Teachers also have committees which meet periodically to examine issues related to student learning needs, social needs, overall academic progress, or awards and recognitions.

In the course of these many teacher-based meetings and work sessions (many of which the principal does not directly attend or preside over), decisions and recommendations are made to the principal which are then usually accepted outright or modified and brought back to the faculty for further review. Although some 'executive' decision-making is always the prerogative of the administration, St. Jude has found that the most effective model of leadership is one in which multiple voices have the opportunity to come up with creative and realistic solutions to teaching problems that are much more likely to stick than broad blanket advisories and inflexible policy statements.

The school board provides a different quality of leadership in terms of policies that extend beyond the curriculum--but as mentioned before, this group contains representatives from both with the school/parish community as well as individuals beyond the school community who might nevertheless have great insights into the process of effective governance and organizational success. The administration respects the collective voice of the board and works, whenever possible to give it broad direction, while taking the time to listen to its collective wisdom and to honor the decisions it makes--making it clear that healthy dissent, disagreement, and conflict are necessary to understanding the realities of the situation.

Parents have other opportunities for leadership that include, primarily, the Home and School Association. This organization supports teachers, students, and families. Although it's main function is often thought of as a fundraising organization, the events it holds generate the social cement for the larger community. It takes just as much energy and thought to find effective ways of spending funds, and it has often been parents and participants in the HASA board who identify some of the most far-reaching targets for the funds that are raised and spent.

Finally, students participate in a student council, which acts both to empower individuals to experience leadership, but to do good for the larger community. One of the biggest accomplishments of this group is to identify charities which are the beneficiaries of \$1 dress down days held each month. The students have a voice that can represent the needs of organizations or ideas that are important to their lives, and which they feel will have a lasting impact. In time, this organization has the potential to become a body which can help establish a certain level of policy within the school or perhaps direct concerns and questions toward the faculty and administration which will allow student voices to be heard.

From the students, to the parents, to the teachers and other members of the parish community, members of the broader St. Jude community can become as involved as they choose in leadership, which is more than necessary for building a successful organization that will continue beyond any one pastor, principal, or group of influential

persons.

4. What policies and processes are in place to ensure equity of learning opportunities and support for innovation?

St. Jude's mission statement makes it clear that we intend to serve "our students," which is a way of saying that any student accepted to St. Jude, we are committed to seeing that they receive the best education possible, with all reasonable accommodation. We have committed significant time and funds to hiring full time resource personnel and classroom aids who are able to conduct additional inclusionary, small group, and one-on-one interventions. The mentoring program is often used for tutoring, but it is meant to support students as much in terms of social skills, a friend to reach out to, or to help be more organized about space and study habits. On the other end of the exceptionalities spectrum, we offer a Gifted Opportunities program for students who have shown a consistent ability to achieve at a level in terms of grades and standardized test scores.

St. Jude has implemented a comprehensive system of policies about grading and eligibility to participate in extracurricular activities. In the primary/elementary grades, we have standard-based report cards, which were designed by the teachers themselves, who were paid to work over the summer and develop localized benchmarks based on state standards and local curriculum expectations. In the middle school, eligibility policies are designed to provide checks and balances for students, so that rather than simply losing their eligibility altogether, they receive a series of warnings, reminders, opportunities for remediation, and whatever help they choose to ask for, so that they may be encouraged to improve their working and study habits rather than get discouraged by continual failure. Most students have responded positively to this model and many have succeeded to remain eligible and even achieved honor roll where that may have once been thought unlikely or impossible.

One of the advantages of being a small school with a medium level of direction from our central Schools' Office, is that we can be very innovative, as long as we meet standards for accreditation, school safety, and overall improvement. Courses such as our electives program--referenced earlier, Gifted Opportunities, and the First Move chess program have come about as persons were able to take existing ideas and find ways to grow and improve them. When opportunities or persons approach the school with skills that we find valuable, they are given the ability to grow and develop such ideas into full-fledged programs. For instance, our Spanish teacher proved to not only be good at teaching Spanish as an elective at all grade levels, she also owns and coordinates a dance studio, so we allowed her to develop a dance and drama elective. This later led to her being co-director and choreographer for the spring musical, taking that part of the planning and stress off the music teacher, who was able to focus on other aspects of the show. Our religion director has experience as a Suzuki music instructor, so she has taken on keyboarding instruct as an elective. Our 8th grade teacher has an interest in knitting, so students have begun knitting caps and scarves for babies born premature and other persons who would benefit from that generosity.

As teachers conduct their committee meetings and faculty meetings, they will brainstorm and/or present ideas to the administration which lead to significant improvements in instruction, scheduling, or efficiency. It was pointed out that the principal's decision to have a two-part lunch period took away teacher's ability to share about the happenings of upper and lower grades, respectively. So, reworking the schedule to combine their lunch period once again also had the great benefit of compressing learning time and making it possible to conduct all the electives at one time immediately prior to the lunch period. Because of that, it was a natural extension to hold middle school leveled meetings on days when fine arts electives were in session, as the homerooms teachers ended up with that period free. Likewise in lower grades, the elementary teachers offered to supervise their own afternoon recess in lieu of the traditional lunch recess period. By offering to supervise the afternoon recess twice each week, the principal was able to create time for leveled meetings at the elementary level.

Other programs such as the Young Vincentians (committed to service to the poor) and mention program have come about at the willingness of members of the parish community who do not even have children in the school to provide the framework, time, and energy to get such programs up and running. Because of the willingness of teachers and administration to allow these ideas to be followed through, the school now has these and a few other programs which have become an identifying piece of our mission and recent success

Overall Assessment:

Operational: The school has leaders who are advocates for the school's vision and improvement efforts. The leaders provide direction and systematically allocate resources to implement curricular and co-curricular programs that enable students to achieve expectations for their learning. Leaders encourage collaboration and shared responsibility for school improvement among stakeholders. The school's policies, procedures, and organizational conditions ensure equity of learning opportunities and support for innovation. While these processes and conditions are being implemented, the implementation is not systemic across the school, and the results are varied. The preponderance of the evidence supports an overall assessment of "operational" and is substantiated in the responses to the Indicators Rubric.

Standard 3. Teaching and Learning

STANDARD: The school provides research-based curriculum and instructional methods that facilitate achievement for all students.

Impact Statement: A school is successful in meeting this standard when it implements a curriculum based on clear and measurable expectations for student learning that provides opportunities for all students to acquire requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Teachers use proven instructional practices that actively engage students in the learning process. Teachers provide opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and skills to real world situations. Teachers give students feedback to improve their performance.

Indicators Rubric: Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school. The responses to the rubric should help the school identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school's responses to the focus questions and examples of evidence.

Definitions of Indicators Rubric:

Not Evident	Little or no evidence exists
Emerging	Evidence indicates early or preliminary stages of implementation of practice
Operational	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are actively implemented
Highly Functional	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

Indicators: In fulfillment of this standard, the school:

3.1 Develops and implements curriculum based on clearly defined expectations for student learning:

Emerging

3.2 Promotes active involvement of students in the learning process, including opportunities for them to explore application of higher-order thinking skills and investigate new approaches to applying their learning:

Operational

3.3 Gathers, analyzes, and uses data and research in making curricular and instructional choices:

Operational

3.4 Designs and uses instructional strategies, innovations, and activities that are research-based and reflective of best practice:

Operational

3.5 Offers a curriculum that challenges each student to excel, reflects a commitment to equity, and demonstrates an appreciation of diversity:

Operational

3.6 Allocates and protects instructional time to support student learning:

Operational

3.7 Provides for articulation and alignment between and among all levels of schools:

Emerging

3.8 Implements interventions to help students meet expectations for student learning:

Highly Functional

3.9 Monitors school climate and takes appropriate steps to ensure that it is conducive to student learning:

Operational

3.10 Provides comprehensive information and media services that support the curricular and instructional programs:

Operational

3.11 Ensures that all students and staff members have regular and ready access to instructional technology and a comprehensive materials collection that supports the curricular and instructional program:

Highly Functional

Focus Questions:

1. How does the school ensure that the curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessments are aligned and articulated across grade levels in support of the expectations for student learning?

St. Jude has always maintained that we must address the standards provided by the State of Indiana. We recognize that the standards are imperfect--such that they may focus too heavily on lower order knowledge; may often have too much information to learn in a given subject or grade level; and sometimes not enough. Nonetheless, we will begin by asserting that our curriculum must grow from and acknowledge the importance of these standards, as they are the basis for annual school wide assessment.

The process of reviewing and aligning these standards is emerging through two different practices, both of which will eventually inform and develop based off one another. The first approach has been to begin implementing standard-based reporting, starting with primary grades and moving up. In 2008 we developed standard-based report cards for Grades K-2. The teachers met over a period of several days, looking to coordinate a number of factors: IN Academic Standards, their own grade level resources and needs, experience in what they have realistically been able to accomplish in their grade level, vertical alignment from one grade to the next, and those for which valid assessment data could be gathered or obtained. By addressing all of these needs at one time, they began an intuitive process of alignment that will lead to a consistent growth of achievement from Kindergarten and up. Rather than having report cards where one grade learns something that is completely ignorant of the others, there will be an organic connectedness and conscious desire to build skills from one grade to each successive level.

In 2009, this process was continued by introducing standards for Grades 3 and 4, also revising Grades K-2 after a full year to experience the process in actual use. In time, we intend to extend the standard-based model all the way up to 8th grade, as long as we can still find a way to acknowledge some form of achievement-based recognition (honor roll, eligibility, etc.) alongside the standard-based model.

The second part of the alignment process comes out of our systematic curriculum building process using the Curriculum Mapper tool. Since 2004-2005, St. Jude has been collecting information about teaching content, skills, and assessments. This process was interrupted briefly during the 2008-2009 school year, because we were waiting for further clarification about what our Diocese was expecting as outcomes of the mapping process. As we move forward, our maps will be updated on an annual basis, containing the following information: essential questions/content, lesson objectives/cross curriculum connections (including standards), authentic reading/writing, and assessments and projects. The purpose of these maps will be to begin describing and articulating the essential elements of unit planning that will form the basis for a dynamic school wide curriculum. This will be supported by the process the Diocese has now identified for building a district-wide curriculum, beginning in 2009 with K-12 Science.

In 2009, teachers in grades 5-8 (the middle school) will begin mapping their subject area for 8th grade. In their leveled meetings, teachers can look at one another's maps and look for areas of integration between subjects. The same process will apply to 5th grade in 2010, 6th in 2011, and 7th in 2012. By the end of 4 years, the entire middle school curriculum will have been updated, and the sequence will go back for further articulation and development of the 8th grade curriculum.

Elementary teachers will follow a similar process, beginning with mathematics, then language arts, science, and social studies and specialty courses. Again, at the end of 4 years, they should have a complete, updated curriculum. In the meanwhile, through their weekly leveled meetings, teachers will have the opportunity to help write maps, to share and align standards to one another and to their standard-based report cards.

In addition to the use of standard-based report cards and curriculum mapping, there are other less formal methods of evaluating the alignment between curriculum, assessment, and instruction. Teacher observations conducted as '5 minute walk-thoughts' include watch points essential for good instruction. These include the use of formative assessment techniques, signs of active student engagement, use of appropriate learning styles, and attention to the needs of individual students. Formative observations, conducted once per year, ask the teacher to focus very clearly on how their demonstrated lessons ties a standard through the assessment of prior knowledge, the inclusion of school improvement objectives, using assessment data, and reflecting back on the effectiveness of the lesson. By implication, what principal observations deem important, allows teachers to understand that they are being held accountable for those aspects of their instruction.

Finally, through the collaboration of faculty meetings and leveled meetings (reference in prior answers), teachers are given opportunities to coordinate curriculum standards and assessments. In middle school grades, for instance, our improvement plan expects that teachers will coordinate a cross-curriculum project once each grading period. This means that mathematics, science, social studies, and language arts must work together to find a theme that each of their subjects can address some aspect of, including authentic reading and writing pieces. In the lower grade, this may take the form of conversations between teachers about shared field trips connected to units they are teaching or deciding at which grade level it is best to introduce a certain concept in science or math.

The process of building and aligning curriculum with sound instruction and assessment is one which must necessarily be ongoing and dynamic. As we now have a sound model for moving forward with this on a formal level, through standard-based assessment and the aid of Curriculum Mapper software, our teachers are well suited to make shared decisions and actions that are more effective on a day to day basis.

2. In what ways does the school ensure the implementation of research-based instructional strategies, innovations, and activities that facilitate achievement for all students?

Even as a Catholic School, we are very fortunate to receive a healthy share of public funds for the purposes of professional development. Both the State of Indiana and the Federal Government (through Title IIA) provide

adequate funds to implement a full teacher development program. Professional development takes place in a number of forms. We do allow teachers to take part in off site professional development workshops and conventions such as a conference specifically geared toward the needs of early childhood/primary education; or science; or students with autism. Teachers who desire to attend a content-specific workshop may request to do so and are usually granted permission and funding to do so.

A second form of professional development is through on site programs, which are most frequently tied to the needs of our school improvement plan. This school holds that effective professional development takes place through continued exposure and practice in a topic rather than just one time in-service opportunities. As we develop our approach to problem solving and the assessment of problem solving, for instance, we contracted to have the Northwest Educational Regional Lab (NWREL) do a two-day training in the spring with a follow-up two day training in the fall. The same strategy applies to Language Arts as we have planned a follow-up training refreshment course in the use of the 6+1 Traits of writing. The bottom line is whether provided on site or off, we expect teachers to be actively engaged in ongoing knowledge and understanding of the best practices of their subject.

There are often shorter pieces of professional growth and innovation which take place in faculty meetings and smaller group contexts. This may come from collectively reading and discussing an article that has been presented from the internet or about an idea where teachers feel there is a need for additional attention. About a year ago, our teachers expressed a need for a more common understanding of classroom management practices. Although we were not looking to adopt a system of rigid strictness, we decided to offer a well researched and developed method of professional development as a model for teachers to emulate. We purchased the Fred Jones "Tools for Teachers" books and video series. At several faculty meetings throughout the year, segments of this video series were viewed at faculty meetings, followed by focus questions and discussions for how that lesson could be integrated into our practices as teachers and school-wide. Rather than present this as a two or three day workshop, we felt it would be more worthwhile to share elements of the Fred Jones approach on an ongoing basis. We choose pieces that reflect aspects that are important to school life at the moment--instruction (fall and spring), procedures (beginning of the year), how to work with reactive or talk back behavior (late winter). This resource will also be available for new teachers to read and view even if they have not been participating at other past meetings.

Finally, innovation and best practice comes from teachers themselves being allowed to network, share, and borrow ideas from one another. Between the sharing that takes place during their common lunch period, faculty meetings, and leveled meetings, or by allowing a new teacher to take a paid day to go observe a colleague teach at another school; we expect and allow teachers to share and adapt the best ideas. If an idea works well in one grade, it may be adopted for use school wide. Although Kindergarten has traditionally held its "career day," we have begun to discuss how that idea could be expanded school wide and particularly in middle school, where it is perhaps even more important that students begin to understand the wide range of choices they have to make and the education necessary to attain their goals.

Ensuring an ongoing commitment to research-based practices and allowing innovative ideas to yield results that all students can benefit from comes in the long term application of systematic professional development, but also from empowering the teachers themselves to bring ideas to the table and let them grow as their peers see the value in what is being presented.

3. What processes are implemented to ensure that teachers are well-prepared and effectively implementing the curriculum?

As we grew into the curriculum mapping process (see #1 above), it became apparent that there were three major hurdles to implementation. The first of these was making sure that teachers understood why the process was

important. The second hurdle was helping them feel comfortable with the technology. For many teachers, this was not something they had been accustomed to doing. Even grades were not recorded by computer until the last two years. It was through the patient work of the principal and teachers assisting one another that people learned more and more about the software and found themselves more at ease with the process. This continues to be an area of ongoing attention, but our staff has demonstrated that a) they accept the importance of using curriculum mapping to record, revise, and monitor our curriculum and that b) they are willing to learn new technologies when allowed to do so in a non-threatening and supportive environment.

The third hurdle to implementing the mapping process is time. Every teacher and administrator knows how difficult it can be to accomplish the day-to-day responsibilities of teaching, planning, grading, and addressing social issues and exceptional needs of students. Therefore we understood that some additional times must be found to allow teachers to effectively engage in the use of a mapping process. Several solutions have been found such as allowing teachers to use occasional faculty meetings as 'working meetings' where they are required to stay in the building, but may use the time for mapping or leveled team work; providing recess supervision to allow to use more of the recess time; or even providing a substitute teacher for part of a day. In other cases, time that was once spent calculating grade percentages and filling out report cards by hand has been largely taken over by our Power School system, so now further time can be devoted to endeavors with a proactive end such as this.

Of course, curriculum mapping is one of the lynchpins of a strong curriculum, but its role is as much to help teachers know and reflect on their curriculum as it is to prepare them for it. Having access to high quality teaching materials is another component of this preparedness. Teachers have been given an open invitation to request purchase of authentic literature, either as individual books or as class sets, in any of their subjects. This method is especially encouraged for developing cross curricular instruction in social studies, science, mathematics, and religion. Teachers frequently request purchases for instructional supplements, manipulatives, or other materials which the school will usually purchase or request help from the Home and School Association. In a similar manner, access to standards and standards resources, as provided by the State of Indiana is aided by the teachers having access to their own portion of the website, where they can log in and view links to standards, to Power Teacher login, to their Curriculum Mapper software, to shared assessment tools like the online 6+1 traits assessment, and other commonly used internet tools.

Finally, there are all the processes also described in previous sections of this report--such as teachers' ability to collaborate across grade levels, to both plan and respond to the data that come from common assessments. The information the school receives from many different sources allows teachers to determine how effective their textbooks, literature, and other resources are for a given group of students. It might turn out that the planned curriculum that worked for one group of students is simply too challenging for another group, at which point the past year's teacher will help the newer teacher determine areas where those students might benefit from further instruction. As with so many other processes, there are both formal and informal components that come together to result in a preparation that is both systematic, but also adaptable and responsive to the day-to-day needs of each group of students.

4. How does the school provide every student access to comprehensive information, instructional technology, and media services?

This is an area of true strength at St. Jude. The school has placed a high priority on making educational technology widely available. The school has a full computer lab running 24 workstations with Windows software. Technology instruction consists of project-based learning in Microsoft applications such as Word, Power Point, Excel, and Publisher. Throughout the building, both wired and wireless internet access make the internet available in individual classrooms, both for teacher-used and student accessible computers.

Beginning in 2008, the school began a systematic purchase of Smart Boards that are currently dedicated to the middle school Mathematics and Science rooms as well as a third, portable Smart Board. By the time of our site visit, it is our expectation that we will have additional dedicated Smart Boards installed in the Kindergarten room as well as the middle school Language Arts room.

It is not just the presence of hardware that makes a school strong in its use of technology. Teachers must be well prepared to allow students access that will be meaningful for their learning and the skills they will need as adults. Project-based learning in Computer classes has already been mentioned. In the classroom, however, teachers are being given high level training in the use of Smart technologies. This training does not just teach how to use the software, but how to merge the use of curriculum, instruction, media, and interactive tools.

In addition to the Smart Boards themselves, the school is investing in a document camera and an interactive response system that will integrate seamlessly with the Smart Boards. The document camera allows teachers to integrate ordinary photos, books, or objects with the digital projection display. That objects can be viewed in real time or the image stored for later use and manipulation. The response system allows teachers to ask questions of students and to respond in a manner that supports high quality formative assessment, classroom discussion, and to more actively engage students at all levels.

St. Jude is also actively working to make web based media and technologies more accessible to students both in school and at home. Our web site is actively maintained and able to be edited through direct user access. We are in the process of posting high quality educational links that contain tools for students, teachers, and parents to access. We have also catalogued our library's contents into an online system that allows for accurate tracking of student use. For several years, St. Jude has been trying to implement either or both of the Scholastic Reading Counts or Accelerated Reader platform which allows students to self assess both their level of challenge and their comprehension of authentic fiction and non-fiction literature. This process has run into some technical hurdles, but we are finally poised to adopt a web-based version of either of these programs. They will allow us to collect and analyze further data about student reading patterns and the needs of individual readers. Finally, as part of our school improvement efforts, we are developing a wiki-based platform that will allow students to conduct discussions and explorations of content area vocabulary. This project will allow for a more creative, collaborative, and interactive form of access to language and vocabulary development that does not supplant, but rather reinforces traditional context-based and definition-based learning of vocabulary in the classroom.

This summary has provided an overview of many forms of instructional technology, media, and information services that we are making available to our students. This includes maintaining adequate and up to date hardware, internet access, teacher training, and software that allows our students and teachers to conduct projects that best support learning and 21st century skills. We acknowledge that this landscape will always be changing, but we believe that we are working hard to stay ahead of the curve.

Overall Assessment:

Operational: The school implements a curriculum based on clear and measurable expectations for student learning that provides opportunities for all students to acquire requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The school demonstrates evidence of alignment between the curriculum and instructional practices with systematic implementation across the school. Teachers use proven instructional practices that actively engage students in the learning process. Teachers provide frequent opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and skills to real world situations. Teachers give students regular feedback to improve their performance. The preponderance of the evidence supports an overall assessment of "operational" and is substantiated in the responses to the Indicators Rubric.

Standard 4. Documenting and Using Results

STANDARD: The school enacts a comprehensive assessment system that monitors and documents performance and uses these results to improve student performance and school effectiveness.

Impact Statement: A school is successful in meeting this standard when it uses a comprehensive assessment system based on clearly defined performance measures. The system is used to assess student performance on expectations for student learning, evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction, and determine interventions to improve student performance. The assessment system yields timely and accurate information that is meaningful and useful to school leaders, teachers, and other stakeholders in understanding student performance, school effectiveness, and the results of improvement efforts.

Indicators Rubric: Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school. The responses to the rubric should help the school identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school's responses to the focus questions and examples of evidence.

Definitions of Indicators Rubric:

Not Evident	Little or no evidence exists
Emerging	Evidence indicates early or preliminary stages of implementation of practice
Operational	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are actively implemented
Highly Functional	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

Indicators: In fulfillment of this standard, the school:

4.1 Establishes performance measures for student learning that yield information that is reliable, valid, and bias free:

Highly Functional

4.2 Develops and implements a comprehensive assessment system for assessing progress toward meeting the expectations for student learning:

Operational

4.3 Uses student assessment data for making decisions for continuous improvement of teaching and learning processes:

Operational

4.4 Conducts a systematic analysis of instructional and organizational effectiveness and uses the results to improve student performance:

Emerging

4.5 Communicates the results of student performance and school effectiveness to all stakeholders:

Emerging

4.6 Uses comparison and trend data of student performance from comparable schools in evaluating its effectiveness:

Operational

4.7 Demonstrates verifiable growth in student performance:

Operational

4.8 Maintains a secure, accurate, and complete student record system in accordance with state and federal regulations:

Highly Functional

Focus Questions:

1. How is the assessment system currently used in your school to analyze changes in student performance?

St. Jude has established several standardized and local forms of assessment that provide information about learning throughout the school year. Some of them will be listed and described here. These are academic assessments. Other instruments are used to follow social and religious trends.:

1. Indiana Reading Assessment (Gr. K-2, 3-5 as needed) - conducted 2 or 3 times during the year, which can show individual and collective growth in primary grades in the areas of reading comprehension, phonemic awareness, and writing, among other data. Parents get to review results and may be used in making decisions about intervention strategies (RTI).

2. Weekly math fact assessments (Gr. K-8)- conducted in the computer lab and can show improvement in both speed and accuracy. In some cases, for instance, a student's accuracy may remain flat, but their speed show improvement. Teachers can review this data quarterly (or now, by trimester) and parents receive a copy at the end of the grading period.

3. 6+1 Trait Writing prompts (Gr. K-8)- conducted in the fall and spring (potentially winter as well) to target traits that teachers would like to see as areas for improvement and to offer aspects of writing which need the most development. Rubrics have been customized to be appropriate to different grade levels. Teachers often score rubrics collectively and the results are entered into an online analysis instrument.

4. Mathematics problem solving rubrics (Gr. TBD) - still in development, but eventually this piece will be similar to the writing prompts in that it is used periodically to show school wide the aspects of problem solving where students show the most or least need for attention.

5. ISTEP scores. (Gr. 3-8). The ISTEP test has been rewriting as of spring 2009, which establishes a new benchmark not directly comparable to previous years. Trends and results have been evaluated for the years 2006 through 2009 and even farther back in the school profile. Results can be reviewed in terms of percentage of students passing; receiving pass + designation; IPI - an index scaled to 100%; by standard area; compared to the overall diocesan schools' performance; and individually, down to the scoring of individual constructed response items. Results are available to parents, teachers, and administrators on paper or online.

6. Algebra I End of course assessment (8th grade). This was begun recently with State of Indiana mandate as part

of the Core 40 graduation requirement. Data will be used from year to year in particular to gauge the effectiveness and alignment of the middle school mathematics curriculum with expectations for high school achievement.

7. ACRE Assessment - A test that measures students' knowledge and understanding of the practices of the Catholic faith.

2. What are you doing to ensure that assessment results are timely, relevant, and communicated in a way that can be used by teachers, students, parents, and external stakeholders to aid the performance of individual students?

One of the most important tools enabling a timely sharing of assessment results is the use of electronic data collecting and management. The Survey Monkey website is currently being used to collect data in the 6+1 writing prompts, (will also be) the math prompts, and annual bullying survey. The advantage of Survey Monkey is that it can conduct much of the data analysis on the spot, including the ability to filter or 'cross-tabulate' data by categories. The data can also be exported for further analysis. I-STEP results have now been made available online. Indiana Reading Assessment results are converted to a spreadsheet. The math fact checks are conducted using a Power Point slide show and the results converted to a spreadsheet for data analysis. The use of electronic data gathering and analysis tools helps the school expedite the sharing of results and parse data in ways that gets the most information out of it.

When reports are created, the teachers will be given the chance to review. Collectively, the efforts of the principal and the teachers can be used to draw up a list of written descriptions. This was done with Fall 2008 ISTEP results, when the data were summarized in terms of "Good," "Bad," and "Ugly" aspects of the results. In spite of the terminology used, the point was made with verbal statements that comprised a good summary of what all the numbers really meant.

When results are shared, they data is usually archived in a form that can be accessed throughout time. Postings of school board reports and faculty meeting minutes are left on the web site. Parent bulletins can be searched for use of references to ISTEP scores or school improvement plan. Teachers keep minutes of their leveled meetings which may contain comments or references to implications of the data. Recommendations are made and followed through because they have been documented.

In terms of individual student performance, the school-wide move to trimesters allows for a longer reporting term, and the ability for teachers to create a more comprehensive picture of student achievement. With the moving of ISTEP to the fall and the extension of the first grading period from 9 to 12 weeks, the first trimester of the year will now provide information that is more meaningful and helpful than in the past. The second trimester will bridge the Christmas break, rather than trying to force the end of a grading period prior to that. The final trimester will start sooner than the old 4th quarter, giving better results than having to rush and often cut off final grades a week or two earlier than other quarters.

3. How are data used to understand and improve overall school effectiveness?

The response to question #1 described some of the most important assessments used to measure student growth. The manner in which data are utilized depends on the form. All of the instruments can be used to look at aggregated or disaggregated progress. ISTEP scores can, obviously, be viewed collectively, by grade level, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and even for returning students or non-Catholic students. The Survey Monkey tool allows there results of 6+1 Writing Trait assessments to be viewed by grade level, as a whole, by year, or for all years assessed. The math fact assessment charts depict progress by grade and for all students.

Other tests lend themselves as data for individual intervention. The Indiana Reading Assessment does provide

aggregate results that can be compared from one administration to the next, but it can also assist with the creation of a General Intervention plan, which may eventually lead to a decision about whether to refer a student for further testing.

Some results are interpreted on a school wide basis and used to make major decisions concerning curriculum. Teachers believed that lack of follow-through on instructions was a major cause for some students who were not passing the ISTEP test. Students were given additional instruction in test taking strategies. An analysis of students who did not complete items on the ISTEP, however, revealed that the majority of errors were not due to students failing to follow directions, but not completing items at all, either due to time constraints or perceived difficulty of the item. This affirms an approach which help students understand how to take the test seriously and approach it with a desire to perform well, but that comfort and competence in the subjects being tested is equally as important. Hence, improvement goals must remain front and center.

Other types of data can be applied on a more local level. A school wide analysis of math fact progress is generally not a major use of faculty meeting time. In leveled meetings, elementary teachers can look at the information for their grades and make decisions about how effective their own teaching approach to math fact mastery is being held up in other contexts. The middle school mathematics teachers can use that information to evaluate the individual or collective needs of her students in processing fluency without necessarily requiring the input of her colleagues.

Results of the Indiana Reading Assessment can be broken down in various ways, one of which is to help teachers in those grades determine how reading groups can be composed that will best acknowledge the different learning levels or abilities, so that all students will be given opportunities to participate reading in a way that give them the most success. These are some examples of the way that St. Jude uses data on collective, individual, formal and informal levels to measure school effectiveness and determine what decisions must follow.

4. How are teachers trained to understand and use data in the classroom?

With familiarity comes comfort and with comfort comes use. The process of understanding why data is important, how it should be collected, how used, and what to look for can often take time. The school leadership, including principal and assistant/lead teachers, and the computer teacher, have a fairly sound grasp of how to manipulate data and present it in a form that is readable. The principal in particular takes care to provide data that is comprehensive, but also comprehensible. For instance, rather than distribute only the reports that ISTEP plus provides, the principal takes the data and conducts other evaluations with it that put multiple year trends and disaggregate results into clearer focus. When results from writing assessments are presented, they will be given in both aggregate form (all grades) and according to the levels at which students were assessed (K-2, 3-5, 6-8).

The understanding that as a part, though certainly not the only part of teachers' weekly leveled meeting time is to be spent looking at data and conducting analysis, leads to a certain expectation and a practice that becomes easier to do as time goes on. With exposure to this expectation, teachers have become more fluent in their discussions about the results.

Another form of professional development that has aided this process was an assessment workshop that was held in the spring of 2009. This workshop was designed to get teachers talking about forms of assessment and about the importance and use of different kinds of assessments, particularly the formative type. While this is a standard in teaching, it cannot be presumed that all teachers have the same level of background or type of educational training in using assessments. This afternoon workshop helped get conversation going for teachers to realize both the many types of assessments and data collection they are already doing, perhaps without knowing it, and those which they might also consider adding into their practice.

Finally, technology lends itself to more fruitful forms of teacher exposure to data. The Power School grading system has the potential to create many kinds of reports and statistics concerning student performance on tests or work. The principal has also become accustomed with the use of pivot tables in Excel, which, for certain types of data, could make for a very easy method of presenting results broken down in different ways. The Smart Interactive Response System, briefly referenced in an earlier standard, will allow teachers to conduct on the fly data analysis as students respond to questions. This will allow teachers to conduct class assessments focused around the real time responses that indicate students' understanding.

Training in the use of Smart Boards and other related technologies has already been discussed as a priority that is ongoing with the implementation of training in the improvement plan itself. The addition of an interactive response system, or 'clickers,' will allow teachers to conduct on-the-spot statistical analysis and more effective formative assessments in their day to day teaching.

Overall Assessment:

Operational: The school uses a comprehensive assessment system based on clearly defined performance measures that yield valid and reliable results. The system is used to assess student performance on expectations for student learning, evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction, and determine interventions to improve student performance. The assessment system yields timely and accurate information that is meaningful and useful to school leaders, teachers, and other stakeholders in understanding student performance, school effectiveness, and the results of improvement efforts. The preponderance of the evidence supports an overall assessment of "operational" and is substantiated in the responses to the Indicators Rubric.

Standard 5. Resource and Support Systems

STANDARD: The school has the resources and services necessary to support its vision and purpose and to ensure achievement for all students.

Impact Statement: A school is successful in meeting this standard when it has sufficient human, material, and fiscal resources to implement a curriculum that enables students to achieve expectations for student learning, to meet special needs, and to comply with applicable regulations. The school employs and allocates staff that are well qualified for their assignments. The school provides ongoing learning opportunities for all staff to improve their effectiveness. The school ensures compliance with applicable local, state, and federal regulations.

Indicators Rubric: Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school. The responses to the rubric should help the school identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school's responses to the focus questions and examples of evidence.

Definitions of Indicators Rubric:

Not Evident	Little or no evidence exists
Emerging	Evidence indicates early or preliminary stages of implementation of practice
Operational	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are actively implemented
Highly Functional	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

Indicators: In fulfillment of this standard, the school:

5.1 Recruits, employs, and mentors qualified professional staff that are capable of fulfilling assigned roles and responsibilities:

Highly Functional

5.2 Assigns professional staff responsibilities based on their qualifications (i.e., professional preparation, ability, knowledge, and experience):

Highly Functional

5.3 Ensures that all staff participate in a continuous program of professional development:

Highly Functional

5.4 Provides and assigns staff that are sufficient in number to meet the vision and purpose of the school:

Highly Functional

5.5 Budgets sufficient resources to support its educational programs and to implement its plans for improvement:

Operational

5.6 Monitors all financial transactions through a recognized, regularly audited accounting system:

Highly Functional

5.7 Maintains the site, facilities, services, and equipment to provide an environment that is safe and orderly for all occupants:

Highly Functional

5.8 Possesses a written security and crisis management plan with appropriate training for stakeholders:

Highly Functional

5.9 Ensures that each student has access to guidance services that include, but are not limited to, counseling, appraisal, mentoring, staff consulting, referral, and educational and career planning:

Highly Functional

5.10 Provides appropriate support for students with special needs:

Operational

Focus Questions:

1. What is the process for recruitment, induction, placement, development, evaluation, and retention of qualified teachers, administrators, and support staff?

The Diocese of Ft. Wayne-South Bend pre-screens all applicants for instructional positions by requiring a full application, background check, and verification of credentials at the district level. Those applicants, once approved, may apply to individual schools for consideration. Positions that come open are both publicly posted through the diocesan web site and at the local level of the school and church. Applicants may be considered both of their own initiative to approach the school and by way of referral to the school, as long as they have the aforementioned application on file.

Personnel for non-certified/classified positions are interviewed in a similar manner. The position is posted internally by way of school and church bulletins. If insufficient applicants are available internally, the process may also be publicly posted. This is according to the norms of school board policy. Whether being interviewed for an instructional or support position, applicants are interviewed using a standard set of questions for that position, which are generally 10 to 12 questions in number. For teaching positions, other parties of the faculty may have the opportunity to visit with candidates and conduct their own limited interview. For instance, the review team for the Kindergarten position open in 2007 included the Kindergarten aide the assistant principal, and the first grade teacher. This committee does not make any binding decision on employment, but may help advise the principal as to the overall comfort with the candidates presented. High priority is placed on making reference checks and a review of past educational and work experience to ensure that the candidates' self reported abilities are resonant with their documented qualifications.

Persons placed into new positions may be partnered with a mentor teacher who can advise based on working in a similar grade or subject area. St. Jude is a small enough school that teachers can very quickly build supportive interpersonal relationships. The atmosphere is one of mutual support and camaraderie. The same peer-to-peer coaching that allows teachers to assist one another in the using and learning of technologies such as Power School or Curriculum Mapping allows new teachers to receive the attention they need in getting up to speed on the use of tools or resources specific to the school. Leveled meetings give further opportunity for conversation and interaction with their peers.

The evaluation of teachers is conducted using two parallel instruments. "5 minute" observations may be conducted anywhere from 1 to 4 times throughout the school year. The form is a simple one page format that looks for key areas concerning instruction--physical layout of the room, use of formative techniques, teaching to multiple intelligences, and so on. The walk through observation provides a snapshot of the classroom and give simple to digest feedback about the classroom experience. Teachers understand that they may be subject to a walk in observation at any time, documented or not, though only the documented observations are added to the teacher's evaluation file.

The other piece used is the formative observation. This is a little more like a traditional teaching observation. It begins with the submission of a lesson plan and a pre-interview. Teachers are informed that the formative observation is an opportunity to present the type of teaching that they would like to receive feedback from an outside party. Whereas the 5-minute piece is principal selected, the formative piece is teacher selected. After the lesson, the teacher takes part in a post observation interview and also receives feedback from the observer under the INTASC accreditation standards for instruction.

At the end of the year, the teacher completes a self reflection that considers how the teacher has addressed progress toward the school's improvement goals and his or her own personal goals. The principal provides feedback on the teacher's reflection as well as any other overall area of affirmation or concern as seen through that year's observations or occurrences.

Retention of faculty and staff at St. Jude has traditionally been high. Job security (given recent economic conditions) is certainly part of the explanation for this, but not entirely. Catholic school pay has been greatly improved, but is still known to lag public school salaries by 30 to 40%. Instead, it is the close-knit, positive, and exciting environment that we propose as the reason for higher retention. The staff who serve as secretaries, aides, custodial, and other positions can be parents from the school or members of the church. This relationship can present itself occasionally as a challenge, such that those persons must carefully negotiate which role they are taking on when working with teachers and administration. More often than not, however, it leads to a higher level of commitment and caring on behalf of their work and the students they work for, which only improves the quality of the educational and social environment.

2. How does the leadership ensure that the allocation of financial resources is supportive of the school's vision, educational programs, and its plans for school improvement?

Funding Catholic education is always a challenge. 55% of the school's general fund comes from family paid tuition and fees. 40% comes from the support of the church. The remaining 5% comes from corporate rebate programs, individual donations, grants, and state or federal income. As this report has pointed out at length. Title II and IV of the No Child Left Behind Act and the Professional Development grant from the State of Indiana have provided outstanding access to teacher development funds in the past several years. This has offset literally tens of thousands of dollars that would otherwise have to be found from other sources or else forego necessary training in areas related to school improvement.

Another example of creative use of purchasing has been the decision to retain textbooks for many of the latest adoption cycles. Instead of purchasing new hardcover books, teachers have been given the commitment that they are allowed to request and purchase classroom literary sets and literature that can be used to do more authentic teaching in religion, social studies, and science. The application of monies that might have once been used solely for textbooks to online programs such as Accelerated Reader also reflect a growing awareness that the measured use of information technologies and media in both print and electronic form, will need to be taken into consideration with future financial planning.

That is not the only creative decision that has been made however. SCRIP is a fund that draws from selling retail

gift cards which the school receives at a discounted rate. The proceeds of SCRIP sales have funded (again) tens of thousands of dollars in upgrades to the schools technological infrastructure, including a computer lab, secured entry system, and Smart Boards. The SCRIP fund will continue to generate essential revenue that will be used for funding the maintenance of a relevant and functional technology base.

The Home and School Association represents another major source of non-budgeted income. Outlays from HASA have been used to provide teachers with access to 'startup' supplies for their classrooms and stipends for taking on additional duties. On a larger scale HASA has funded the other portion of the secured entry system, additional Smart Boards and related hardware, a new laminating machine, and upgrades to the school playground. The Home and School Association has begun to discover fundraising opportunities that bring in nearly double the proceeds of previous efforts, while eliminating the need for large quantities of the more odious direct sales or 'bake sale'-type events that may have been conducted in the past.

The most recent challenge financially has been that which many Catholic schools have been challenged by: declining enrollment due in particular to changing demographic and economic factors while at the same time, an increasing need for financial aid and support. As salaries, maintenance, and utility costs rise, so does tuition, which becomes more and more challenging to sell. The future success of the school's ability to provide the best available programming, staff, and educational resources will depend greatly on finding more successful results in its marketing, increasing enrollment and retention, and finding more stable sources for financial aid. The ability to select grants that will yield programs in alignment with the school's mission and improvement priorities will be another area subject to greater development.

3. How does the leadership ensure a safe and orderly environment for students and staff?

Maintaining a safe and orderly environment consists of efforts that are both proactive and contingent in nature. In terms of being proactive, teachers are expected to maintain classroom level procedures and rules. The school handbook spells out a wide range of appropriate consequences and responses for types of misbehavior, without being strictly prescriptive.

There are some school wide procedures that all students are expected to acknowledge. For instance, the "airport rule" states that making comments or depictions of sex, drugs, or violence may result in an immediate office referral. The "silent signal" rule is a procedure for requesting student silence and attention in any context. The "safe in seats" rule indicates that if an adult is out of the room, students should be sitting in their desks.

Part of maintaining an orderly environment includes making sure that students understand limits and boundaries. Teachers and staff are very careful to monitor students' whereabouts and report when they discover that a student is not in the location expected. Students understand the consequences that follow if they do not have permission to be somewhere, even if it is with another teacher. A generic carbon form was redesigned to make it easier for teachers and staff to report incidents and give consequences, rather than have to write each incident out in narrative form. Recess rules and procedures clearly spelled out in the employee/volunteer handbook also indicate the importance of attentive, high quality supervision on the playground.

Other efforts school wide have attempted to build a safe environment by way of creating a more positive student dynamic. The counselor teaches a "Peaceworks" program that give students the language to express and resolve problems. Students in grades K-4 are assigned to seats at lunch. Once each week, students sit at assigned tables where there grade levels are mixed, so that they get to know students in other grades and develop a 'family' connection. The PE teacher will be starting a program designed to bring more dynamic and cooperative games both to gym class and to the playground.

Attention to safe facilities is a function of the principal in cooperation with custodial and cleaning staff. The

custodial crew takes great pride in keeping hallways clean and free of litter. Areas that have been neglected for safety are dealt with as promptly as possible. An example of a major lapse in facilities was addressed in 2008 when a secured entry system was finally installed. Due in part to the spread out layout of the building, in part because of the type of door hardware, and in part because of finances, it was only recently that this system was finally installed, in which visitors to the school and church were required to buzz the office and request entry during the day. Updating security cameras was another addition to this system.

When it comes to contingency measures, fire drills, weather drills, lockdown drills, and off site evacuation drills have all been conducted on a periodic basis. The crisis plan was revised and presented in 2008, with plans to be reviewed and updated at most every 2 years. Title IV funds were used to purchase evacuation kits and 2-way radios for all teachers. In addition to the PA system and cell phones, the radios serve as a readily available and highly portable instrument for communication in a disaster situation. Communication with parents in moments of crisis is important, so the school has invested in a communication system which is capable of sending messages to parents cell phones and email addresses on a moment's notice.

4. What process is used to ensure and monitor that each student has access to guidance and resource services that meet the needs of the student?

St. Jude has several levels of support services. For all types of supports that will be described here, it is important to point out that they may be initiated by the teacher, the parent, or the principal; although parental permission is usually required before making a final decision. In many cases, a teacher will document a trend of poor performance or a parent will suggest to the school that they have been having great difficulty with completing homework at home. Although the first steps to addressing such concerns should always be a conference between the parents and school, including the student when appropriate, a situation that does not improve with initial dialogue may receive intervention through other ways.

For academic needs, the General Education Intervention (GEI) is often one type of formal step that can be taken when a student is not apparently keeping pace with academic standards. The GEI is a way to address the needs whether or not they are medical/psychological in nature. It may look at factors as simple as whether or not a student is completing homework to those as complicated as how a student's temperament might affect his or her ability to remain a constructive member of the classroom. Functional behavior assessments or behavior plans are other examples of instruments which can be used to support students in the classroom.

As discussed in response to other standards, the mentoring program is available to students not only for academic needs. Although tutoring and help with after school work is probably is most common manifestation, mentoring has been requested or recommended for students who may experience social shyness, who seem unmotivated, or who have been experiencing a difficult time in the home environment. We are clear to indicate to parents and teachers that mentoring is not counseling and it is not meant to solve the underlying problems occurring in the classroom. It can be a way to give friendship and confidence to a child that will allow them to grow into other steps necessary to improve their level of performance, whatever the concern may be.

Of course, students who do not show great progress through a GEI, mentoring, or other interventions (such as small group instruction) may be referred for more formal special education assessment. The South Bend public schools do provide the personnel and access to assessment and consultation services. St. Jude has a full time resource teacher who is able to provide modest levels of direct service both to students with formal IEPs and even those who have been deemed early on to need additional support in one given subject or topic. Homeroom teachers, too, understand that the preferred model of education is an inclusionary model. So teachers have been given professional development in the types of accommodations that are able to be provided in the classroom setting. Giving teachers the ability to discuss the needs and accommodations of student working under a GEI or IEP is another advantage to conducting the weekly leveled meetings.

Access to a licensed counselor is made available for free to all students. Students will see the counselor for a wide variety of reasons, mostly emotional, social, or behavioral in nature. The counselor has the advantage of teaching all grades once each month in a program directed toward improving social interactiveness, the use of appropriate assertive techniques, and in empathy. Her ability to work with all students at the instructional level, to counsel students individually, and mediate as a member of the faculty with small groups of students, creates a powerful glue of sorts that helps to ensure a stable and safe social environment. That responsibility of course extends to all teachers as well as the principal, but the counselor is understood to have unique knowledge of the existence of underlying emotional stressors.

In rare instances, students may be required to seek out external forms of counseling or psychological assessment in order to continue as a part of the normal learning environment. This option is exercised with great caution, and only when it is believed that the opinion of an outside professional is necessary to determine that both the school and the student will be best served by his or her continuation in that setting. Although the school does not pay for external consultation, it is an essential factor in the school's ability to maintain an educational and social environment that best serves its mission.

Overall Assessment:

Highly Functional: The school effectively uses human, material, and fiscal resources to implement a curriculum that enables students to achieve and exceed expectations for student learning, to meet special needs of all students, and to comply with applicable regulations. The school systematically employs and allocates staff members who are well qualified for their assignments in all content areas. The school provides and fully supports ongoing, job-embedded learning opportunities for all staff to improve their effectiveness, including both professional and support staff. The school ensures compliance with applicable local, state, and federal regulations. The preponderance of the evidence supports an overall assessment of "highly functional" and is substantiated in the responses to the Indicators Rubric.

Standard 6. Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

STANDARD: The school fosters effective communications and relationships with and among its stakeholders.

Impact Statement: A school is successful in meeting this standard when it has the understanding, commitment, and support of stakeholders. School personnel seek opportunities for collaboration and shared leadership among stakeholders to help students learn and advance improvement efforts.

Indicators Rubric: Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school. The responses to the rubric should help the school identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school's responses to the focus questions and examples of evidence.

Definitions of Indicators Rubric:

Not Evident	Little or no evidence exists
Emerging	Evidence indicates early or preliminary stages of implementation of practice
Operational	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are actively implemented
Highly Functional	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

Indicators: In fulfillment of this standard, the school:

6.1 Fosters collaboration with community stakeholders to support student learning:

Highly Functional

6.2 Has formal channels to listen to and communicate with stakeholders:

Highly Functional

6.3 Solicits the knowledge and skills of stakeholders to enhance the work of the school:

Highly Functional

6.4 Communicates the expectations for student learning and goals for improvement to all stakeholders:

Operational

6.5 Provides information about students, their performance, and school effectiveness that is meaningful and useful to stakeholders:

Operational

Focus Questions:

1. How does the school's leadership ensure that the school is responsive to community expectations and stakeholder satisfaction?

There are both formal and informal channels that the administration uses to stay in touch with community expectations and satisfaction. Home and School Association (HASA) and School Board are two of the most important organizations where school parents and members of the church community can be involved with the school. HASA is committed to supporting the teachers, parents, and students of the school through organizing community events and providing financial support to instructional efforts. The level of parental involvement in HASA activities and the community's response to the events they plan can be an important indicator of parent satisfaction. Well planned events that attract large numbers of persons from within and beyond the school community demonstrate a healthy and vibrant base of satisfaction and support for the school's efforts.

The School Board provides an even more structured forum for gauging community sentiment. In theory parents may contact board members to ask for specific non-instructional or personnel issues to be addressed; but more practically, the board seeks to establish sound policies and determine the overall needs of the school community through the strategic planning process outline under Standard 2. The conversations that board members bring to the table reflect the interests, concerns, ideas, and talents of the broader stakeholder groups as they seek to make their parish school a place of pride and success.

To be sure, both the school and the school board do conduct periodic surveys to learn about public sentiment. These might be general surveys like those conducted in 2005 and 2008, or surveys more specific to topics, such as bullying (every fall) or the Band Program survey in 2009. These results can give a healthy quantitative and qualitative snapshot of the community.

Examples of less formalized means of responsiveness and satisfaction come with parishioners or parents who approach the school with ideas and initiatives. An earlier standard gave the example of how member of the church community were responsible for implementing both the Young Vincentians organization and the school's mentoring program. Their cooperation with the school has led them to a very positive view of the school's efforts to grow and improve. In other cases, parents may recommend the use of certain materials or website.

The school has kept very close track of attrition and reasons for student entry after Kindergarten and attrition prior to their 8th grade year. It can be shown, for instance, that one year was particularly bad for students leaving due to social conflicts. The next year was far more stable in that respect. In the most recent year, reasons for leaving have much more to do with the economy and family mobility--essentially those moving away from the neighborhood. Reasons for entry have much more to do with dissatisfaction with local public schools and inability of other schools to address their child's learning needs. These areas have become strengths for St. Jude, as it has earned a reputation of helping students see success where it had previously been lacking in other settings.

Finally, good communication is the first and last most important component of responsiveness to stakeholders. From the administration down, St. Jude expects its leadership, secretaries, and teachers to respond promptly to inquiries and questions. The principal can be reached through phone, email, in person (appointment preferred, but walk-in accommodated), or by mail. Responses with a 24 hour period are considered the norm, with rare exceptions. Even if an answer or resolution is not known, someone in the school office can usually refer the person to someone that can give the needed answer. In other instances, a simply follow-up phone call will also go a long way toward affirming whether the person received the response or answer they were seeking. These methods, both through formal organizations and through person-to-person contacts and initiatives, go a long way toward understanding and meeting community expectations.

2. How does the school's leadership foster a learning community?

The school administration, starting with the principal, and working down through lead teachers, both certified and non-certified faculty, and to the students themselves--works to convey the message that school is above all other things a place to learn and celebrate faith (always first) and a place to enjoy being a serious student. School should be enjoyable, fun, and engaging; but the message has to be one that school is a place for working hard, using time for learning purposes, generating high quality results, ensuring the best success of each individual student, and allowing teachers to grow in their profession.

There are numerous small artifacts, practices, and indicators which show evidence of the importance of learning community. The Family Handbook and Faculty Handbooks both devote a lot of print and language to setting up high expectations for achievement. Students must understand the implications of poor attendance or tardiness, of declining opportunities to receive extra help or make up tests, of how they must maintain their eligibility to be fully participant in extracurricular activities. They have been asked to reframe the use of their library period from one of casual relaxation and conversation to one of quiet and focused reading or studying. Teachers too are asked to make sure that they meet adequate number of minutes of learning time in the subjects that they teach, that they maximize the use of their classroom time for instruction rather than open study hall or 'free time.'

One of the best examples of taking clear and deliberate steps to foster a learning community has been the systematic reworking of the school's schedule. This process occurred over about three years, in which different configurations of the lunch period, period length, passing period length, and timing of the elective period--resulted in a schedule that allows for longer class periods and more learning time. This was aided considerably by the addition of a school wide bell system that could be operated by computer and therefore all bells to ring at odd times rather than just the hour or half-hour. All in all, our students are able to attend 6 core subjects, their elective period, a specialty subject, and a 40 minute lunch period all during the course of a 7 hour school day. This includes religion and time spent in service and worship.

Under Standard 1, considerable time was spent discussing the school's mission of lifelong learning and the many ways that it attempts to bring that to its students. The "First Move" chess program", foreign language instruction for all grades, and middle school electives were all mentioned as examples of fostering the spirit of both academic and social learning. That attitude extends to teachers as well. The often cited leveled meetings and common lunch period are examples of built in opportunities for peer-to-peer sharing, learning, ongoing professional development, and mutual support. Middle school and specialty teachers are assigned to teach electives based on their own talents, qualifications, and interests so that they own experience with lifelong hobbies or learning can be shared enthusiastically with our students.

Finally, we have come to recognize that the learning of parents is another essential part of our function as a school. The web site goes a long way toward establishing this portal of communication and instruction. As a new initiative for the 2009-2010 school year, we are offering a series of parent seminars that should help educate parents in topics that have been important in the school setting. This year's presentations will include Everyday Mathematics, Healthworks museum and childhood nutrition, school wide reading and writing programs, the season of Lent, and how to understand your child's learning needs. We will try to provide strong incentives to promote high parent turnout. This is only our latest example of how we attempt to provide comprehensive learning experience for students, teachers, and parents

3. What avenues are used to communicate information to stakeholders about students, their performance, and school effectiveness?

Various levels of communication are used for various types of stakeholders. In terms of communicating with the general church/parish community, the church bulletin or even after church talks can be used to convey important information. For instance, Catholic Schools' Week has often been used by the principal to address the parish

community about important accomplishments, financial status, or ways in which they can support the school's efforts.

The school board is especially privy to crucial information. The principal will put together fairly detailed reports about enrollment, finances, student test scores and trends, survey results along with verbal descriptions of their significance and the types of data and trends to take note of. With the rare exception of information pertinent specifically to student or personnel cases, the principal is expected to share any information that the board deems important to its objectives.

Finally, with parents in general, information is broadcast through several means. Most important is the school website, which has now been configured to maintain an ongoing archive of all correspondence. This can even be searched for past topics. Families which do not have reliable internet access may of course request to receive paper copies of the newsletter, but web viewing is encouraged because of its interactive nature. The website has also been configured to offer easy access to information, documents, and other web sites that are helpful to parents. Everything from hot lunch, to the school calendar, to online access to grades, and the Department of Education's school statistics page is made available through the website.

Specifically with regards to school performance, progress toward goals and the results of major data pieces are made available in numerical, narrative, or summarized form; whatever is most appropriate to the piece of information and the degree to which it can be shared. With surveys for instance, open ended comments are not always best for sharing, although the quantitative results certainly do lend themselves to it. Email also goes a long way toward informing parents about important trends and information. The ability to forward information from the Diocese or the DOE that affects school policies, scheduling, or curriculum is an important means of making sure that the rationale for decisions is clearly understood.

Overall Assessment:

Highly Functional: The school has the understanding, commitment, and support of all stakeholders. School personnel actively promote and provide regular, systematic opportunities for collaboration and shared leadership among all stakeholders to help students learn and advance improvement efforts and can demonstrate a high level of meaningful participation by most shareholder groups. The preponderance of the evidence supports an overall assessment of "highly functional" and is substantiated in the responses to the Indicators Rubric.

Standard 7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement

STANDARD: The school establishes, implements, and monitors a continuous process of improvement that focuses on student performance.

Impact Statement: A school is successful in meeting this standard when it implements a collaborative and ongoing process for improvement that aligns the functions of the school with the expectations for student learning. Improvement efforts are sustained and the school demonstrates progress in improving student performance and school effectiveness. New improvement efforts are informed by the results of earlier efforts through reflection and assessment of the improvement process.

Indicators Rubric: Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school. The responses to the rubric should help the school identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school's responses to the focus questions and examples of evidence.

Definitions of Indicators Rubric:

Not Evident	Little or no evidence exists
Emerging	Evidence indicates early or preliminary stages of implementation of practice
Operational	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are actively implemented
Highly Functional	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

Indicators: In fulfillment of this standard, the school:

7.1 Engages in a continuous process of improvement that articulates the vision and purpose the school is pursuing (Vision); maintains a rich and current description of students, their performance, school effectiveness, and the school community (Profile); employs goals and interventions to improve student performance (Plan); and documents and uses the results to inform what happens next (Results):

Operational

7.2 Engages stakeholders in the processes of continuous improvement:

Operational

7.3 Ensures that plans for continuous improvement are aligned with the vision and purpose of the school and expectations for student learning:

Highly Functional

7.4 Provides professional development for school personnel to help them implement improvement interventions to

achieve improvement goals:

Highly Functional

7.5 Monitors and communicates the results of improvement efforts to stakeholders:

Operational

7.6 Evaluates and documents the effectiveness and impact of its continuous process of improvement:

Operational

Focus Questions:

1. What is the process for continuous improvement used by the school and what are the results that this process is delivering for student performance and school effectiveness?

A collaborative process is used throughout the planning of school improvement objectives. The school profile takes a comprehensive snapshot of school data and provides the basis for discovering the school's strengths and weaknesses. It acknowledges the school's mission and vision and sees that goals for improvement are aligned with that purpose.

The development of the improvement plan was based on triangulated data, indicating a need for greater attention to students' abilities in reading comprehension and mathematics in problem solving. A series of interventions was developed to address each area. In collaboration, teachers and administrators looked at our needs and have systematically developed and revised aspects of the improvement as time has continued. For instance, it was determined that more quality in-school reading time would be important to students' literacy development. Although not described as such in the original action plan, teachers initiated the concept of a school wide common reading time on Monday and Friday mornings. Though not accounting for the only reading time, these common periods help emphasize the school wide expectation that literacy will be a central expectation of our week, both beginning and end.

Understanding how data affect the need to improve and change strategies in the middle of a goal area has also been critical for monitoring progress under our improvement plan. When it became evident that our gains in mathematics were not yielding the expected results, the teachers in elementary grades conducted an examination of the Everyday Mathematics program. Everyday Mathematics places a strong emphasis on alternative methods of performing computational algorithms, stressing geometry throughout the curriculum, integrated problem solving, and continuous review. In other words, while not specified as a component of our action plan per se, the adoption of Everyday Mathematics was in response to our need for a more systematic approach to many of the interventions within the action plan. More time will be needed to show if this bears results, but we remain optimistic.

The atmosphere of the school has also shifted in favor of adopting ideas which are easy for students to grasp and respond to. Our reading comprehension strategy, known as PROMISE, uses an acronym to represent seven important metacognitive processes of reading. This is a synthesis of the common practices that will be cited in the reading literature: using prior knowledge, reflecting on text, overview, monitoring for understanding, inquiry, sensitivity to mood and image, and evaluation. We have begun to develop graphic organizers, bookmarks, posters, and other materials (in addition to instruction and practice with the strategies) that should allow our students to naturally and easily memorize and grasp the reading process as a form of active thinking about the text.

We have evaluated both comprehensive (standardized) test scores and local assessments to see both large and small trends in achievement. These assessments have allowed us to acknowledge the things that are working well in addition to helping us decide where more attention needs to be given. By the end of 2010, we should have a

firm grasp on the overall success of this latest improvement plan, and be prepared to begin planning what goals should be continued or added to take over for the ones that we have accomplished.

2. What steps are taken to ensure that the improvement goals reflect student learning needs that are aligned with the vision and purpose of the school?

This question was addressed largely in Section 1. To reiterate, the school's mission speaks of educating students spiritually, academically, and socially as lifelong learners. The vision depicts students being given an outstanding high school preparatory curriculum, among other objectives. In choosing goals for improvement, teachers wanted to make sure that students would be well grounded in the areas most fundamental to their success in life. Reading and writing are the underpinning of knowledge acquisition and communication. Although improving reading comprehension was the thrust of our first goal area, teachers recognized that writing is an inextricable link to the reading process and an important means of measuring success in comprehension. For that reason we included an intervention relating to the continued use and application of the 6+1 Traits. We also understand that early phonics development and phonemic awareness allows students to become successful readers, so the use of Wilson/LIPS has been extended more and more systematically into grades K-2.

The point of this is to show that St. Jude has tried to avoid a narrow interpretation of its improvement goals as just needing to improve standardized test scores. We understand that developing children who value learning as a lifelong pursuit and who understand the need for a broad education to achieve success long into their working lives, they need to be supported more broadly in their curriculum. Similarly with mathematics, teachers are not just stressing problem solving as being able to do word problems. Problem solving is considered a cross-curricular effort. Teachers make and document mathematical connections in all subject areas. They emphasize that problems occur and exist in all aspects of life. Some problems deal mainly in numbers, some don't. Problems can include situations that are logistical, personal, social, moral, or political. Our reconfiguring of the Gifted Opportunities elective for grades 5-8 to focus on problem solving is an example of the way we expected students to acquire a desire and passion for being dynamic and creative thinkers that extends beyond just doing worksheets in math class. Ultimately, the way St. Jude challenges students to improve should have an aim of increasing motivation and support students' natural curiosity; rather than more narrow aims, which would perhaps fail to acknowledge the importance of the school's mission and vision.

3. What process is used to ensure that the school personnel are provided professional development and technical assistance to implement interventions and achieve improvement goals?

To become a teacher in the first place, faculty must meet state regulations for licensing in their subject areas. Many teachers have bachelor degrees, if not a Masters in their respective areas of expertise. Mentioned in an earlier focus question was the fact that St. Jude is fortunate to be the recipient of substantial professional development funds from the State and Federal governments. This means that we are able to direct our professional development efforts toward specific aspects of school improvement. It was also described that professional development consisted of off site conferences and workshops specific to teachers' areas of interest, licensure, and content area--math workshops, science workshops, special needs workshops, etc. That is an important area that will continue to receive priority in the use of professional development funds. Indeed, there are occasions when teachers request professional development opportunities that the administration has expressed are not in keeping with overall improvement objectives or would constitute too great a cost for the return. Two teachers wished to attend a workshop on writing traits that would be held a day's drive away. While the intention was laudable, conversation with the principal revealed that refresher training in the 6+1 Traits of writing would be more appropriate and effective as an in school workshop where all members of the faculty would benefit from exposure and renewal of that topic.

This leads to the second thrust of professional development, that alongside the content-specific professional

development comes the most significant portion of funds which are devoted to on site workshops specifically related to improvement goals and objectives. These workshops often occur in recurring fashion such that there is not just one or two days of learning, but a series of events which review and reinforce efforts over several months. The mathematics problem solving workshop, described earlier as a spring and fall effort, is a prime example of this commitment to ongoing and long-term change, recognizing that single, isolated experiences can be less helpful. More and more, other schools in the Diocese are asked to share these responsibilities and will hold joint workshops. This has the twofold effect of promoting a more efficacious and financially responsible use of professional development funds, but also promotes the sharing of ideas and strategies beyond the school walls, for the benefit of all schools.

Building professional development into faculty meetings and leveled meetings must be seen as an equally important attempt to assist teachers in the implementation of improvement goals. Teacher development should not just be seen as having outside speakers come in to teach us new and fancy ideas. Development consists of teachers being given the time and ability to work with each other, to discuss how their efforts and initiatives are working, to explore how certain aspects of the improvement plan can be carried out, and to let those who are more confident in a particular task assist those who are less confident. Development can also come in the form of the principal or other teachers being allowed to practice and model strategies in a non-evaluative, non-threatening environment. Providing formative feedback and peer feedback go a long way toward giving teachers confidence that they are implementing strategies in an effective manner.

Technical assistance is an area where the administration works hard to make tools available to teachers. The PROMISE toolkit, which provides many of the materials used to teach our reading comprehension strategies, is available to teachers in both electronic and paper form, depending on the manner in which they would choose to use it--including with a Smart Board. Access to the 6+1 Writing traits rubric is made available through a web link on the web site that is readily accessible to teachers. The Curriculum Mapping tool is likewise only a mouse click away.

Providing support to teachers in understanding the process of school improvement, in understanding individual roles and responsibilities in that process, and in providing the formal and informal forms of support necessary to meet those goals is critical to the success of an improvement plan. St. Jude tries to meet those needs on all levels.

4. How does the leadership ensure that the improvement plan is implemented, monitored, achieved, and communicated to stakeholders?

Leadership and coordination of the school improvement plan is a function of the principal, assistant principal, lead teacher, and representatives of Mathematics and Language Arts instruction. This committee meets periodically to discuss aspects of the improvement plan as well as academic progress of the school in general.

The principal provides leadership by reviewing the plan in faculty meetings several times throughout the year, often focusing on one aspect of it at a time so that it does not appear overwhelming. The principal establishes instruments for accountability and reporting, and reminds staff members of important benchmarks or assessments as they need to be conducted. The principal will take the results of assessments and present the data in a fashion that can be interpreted and understood by the group that is receiving it (whether teachers or stakeholders). The principal will help coordinate the efforts of teachers to change or accomplish individual aspects of the plan that require larger coordination (such as between the librarians and specialty teachers or computer teacher and elementary teachers).

The assistant principal and lead teacher help to communicate important concepts and ideas to their colleagues. They preside over leveled meetings and give written documentation of ideas and decisions back for administrative consideration. They inform the principal if teachers in general are feeling anxiety over certain new practices or if

other approaches would be more conducive to success.

Communication of the plan's existence and results to stakeholders occurs on several levels. The school board receives information as part of the principal's written and oral reports. The school's improvement plan also coordinates with portions of the strategic plan that deal with benchmarks for improvement and the ongoing development of curriculum materials. Parents receive information by way of parent bulletins and information posted on the web site. Beginning in 2009, some of the school's parent seminars will also be geared toward helping parents understand improvement efforts and learn ways that they can support their children at home with things that are being learned in school.

Overall Assessment:

Operational: The school implements a collaborative and ongoing process for improvement that aligns most functions of the school with the expectations for student learning. Improvement efforts are sustained and the school demonstrates progress in improving student performance and school effectiveness. New improvement efforts are informed by the results of earlier efforts through reflection and assessment of the improvement process. The preponderance of the evidence supports an overall assessment of "operational" and is substantiated in the responses to the Indicators Rubric.

Conclusion

The following focus questions reflect the school's overall analysis of its internal evaluation of the accreditation standards.

Focus Questions

As you review your responses to the standards, what major trends, themes, or areas of focus emerge that cut across the seven standards?

In discussing our overall report, teachers have identified two trends as reaching across all standards. The first trend is collaboration. From informal conversations, to regular leveled meetings, to specialized and ad hoc committees, faculty meetings, and professional development, we have made a commitment to providing opportunities for faculty members to work together to solve problems. Flexibility allows us as a team to discuss, review, and adjust strategies accordingly.

This emphasis on collaboration extends to the broader organization as well--the integration of parents, parishioners, and stakeholders into the process of governing and improving the school. The leadership recognizes that the work of an institution must be delegated to the persons who are intimately tied to its operation for many years, so that its success does not depend on any one person. Examples of such partnerships have been referred throughout this report.

The second trend that we see is that we have been willing to use technology in as many ways possible. We have access to a lot of equipment and show a willingness to learn to use it. Again, the leadership, in cooperation with some very capable persons in hardware, software, and networking, has positioned St. Jude to make use of some very rich technological tools. These have been added piece by piece, for application to instruction, data management and analysis, administrative procedures, as well as internal and external communication. All these facets of technological growth and development have allowed the school to make better use of its time and resources. We hope that this trend will continue to find funding and support in the future.

Based on your review of these cross-cutting themes/trends and each of the seven standards, what would you consider to be your school's greatest strengths?

Our primary strength is a growing unity of thought and purpose which enables us to maximize our students' ability to reach their full potential. This is accomplished in part by weekly grade level meetings and bi-monthly faculty meetings. Teachers and administration are given times for the purpose of conducting systematic and deliberate coordination of efforts, discussions, student intervention plans, and any needed purpose. Even after losing significant professional development time due to a stricter interpretation of the state law, we feel that we have the tools in place to continue developing improvement efforts. We feel that the rapid adoption of technology and desire to bring it into authentic learning opportunities for students is rapidly becoming one of our strengths, though in a moment, we will note that it also brings its share of challenges.

What would you consider to be your school's greatest challenges?

We do still feel that we face many challenges. These include the need for more guidance from the diocesan level (to be fair, with a new superintendent in place, that may now progress once again) with respect to curriculum

development; the need for continuing personnel and tools to support students with exceptionalities; the time or funds to provide training or even a paradigm shift with the integration of technology into the teaching process. In addition, the growth of quantity in data and ability to review it all in an organized and timely fashion continues to be an area where we must give vigilant attention.

Lack of funds prevents us from being on the cutting edge with regard to technology, although we seem to have done quite well with the limited resources we have found. However, we do feel that we lack the training to appropriately implement technology and in many cases find it hard to support the curriculum with what we have. Strategic challenges include the need for more physical space and to continue developing school enrollment, which would allow us to greatly expand support service, rather than consider if and when to make cuts based on smaller numbers. Keeping the largely volunteer-driven leadership at the church and school level focused on a common set of goals and moving forward with strategic planning initiatives can really make or break our ability to see long term institutional development. Those pieces appear to be in place at the moment, but as little as 5 years' time could change that very quickly.

How will you use the insights gained from this self-assessment to inform and enhance your quality assurance and continuous improvement efforts?

This report helped us to put together a common view of our school that integrates all facets of its operation. We are used to seeing the day to day workings from the point of view of our various roles and positions. The report was helpful for allowing us to gain affirmation of the many things we seem to be doing quite well. At the same time, it has helped us to see areas where much less thought or attention may have been given. We have already been able to address steps that can help fill in some of those gaps. For example, if we felt that we needed to spend more time examining the results of certain assessments, we have already been able to make that a higher priority as a topic of discussion at the leveled meetings.

We are also beginning to see a gradual evolution in our improvement process. Although it began as one focused narrowly on problem solving and reading comprehension, we have come to understand how all of the school's efforts contribute to those goals. Reading comprehension is supported by the ability to integrate vocabulary development, finding supportive technology, parental support, mentoring, and resource services for certain students. The concept of problem solving is much more than a mathematical one. It necessarily includes getting students and teachers to think more strategically about the challenges they face; introducing learning experiences that are richer in project-oriented learning; and integrated across subject areas. Teachers and students alike have responded positively to such efforts.

At the same time, this report has made clear that we have strengths that we may not have seen at first. Had we asked the question a year ago, we doubt whether collaboration or technology would have been named as characteristics where the school was most secure. The next version of our improvement plan will do well, then, to provide a larger role for technological interventions and opportunities to integrate teaching, regardless of what actual goals are selected. Overall, the insights of this report were helpful in identifying the areas needing improvement. We will continue to build our strengths and acknowledge and address our challenges.