Designing our Future

Visiting Team Report

For

St. Maurice School

By

A Visiting Team
Appointed by:

Middle States Association
Of Colleges and Schools

Commission on Elementary Schools

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Introduction to the Visit

St. Maurice School was founded in 1953 by the Sisters of Mercy. Their mission was to provide students with the skills to become responsible, educated, and faith filled leaders. Today the administration, faculty and staff strive to nurture, and help each child have self worth, a personal relationship with God in an educational institution that it Christ centered.

Everything in the building from the school value for the year, **Compassion**, a veteran, dedicated faculty, a well maintained facility and happy engaged students point to a warm nurturing Catholic parochial, fruitful institution.

While the school is strong the eventuality of change for the diocesan schools is inevitable, as in school closures or regionalization of schools. It is incumbent that the school seriously considers the problem of future enrollment and retention and move to increase the enrollment for the purpose of the perpetuity of the school. The self study indicated areas of challenge as well as all the strengths. The challenges listed are certainly worth note and are important, but improvement, may be futile if the school population does not improve over the next three to five years.

Institutional Advancement efforts must take priority above all others. We suggest this be done in tandem. Creating a program which would feed up from the bottom would bring much needed numbers. Retention is critical in this endeavor; the school should investigate adopting a "middle school model" which would appeal to the intermediate grades so students there would not be tempted to exit the school before the 8th grade. There are many models available that would fit the philosophy.

The Mission & Beliefs Study

Description:

The mission statement for St. Maurice School was developed during the spring of 2009. A committee of several teachers reviewed the previously written philosophy and revised portions of it to develop the new mission statement. The mission statement is reviewed periodically and updated as necessary. The following is the current mission statement for St. Maurice School:

St. Maurice School was founded in 1953 by the Sisters of Mercy to serve the students and families of Saint Maurice Parish, Forest Hills, and surrounding areas. Our mission is to provide our students with the skills to become responsible, educated, and faith-filled leaders of tomorrow in the way that Jesus intended them to be. The faculty and staff of Saint Maurice School strive to teach, nurture, and help each child develop a personal relationship with God in an educational system that is Christ-centered. We integrate Catholic instruction of the Gospel values across the curriculum in kindergarten through eighth grade. We support the inspiring words of Pope John Paul II who stated that, "Christian community is not merely a concept to be taught but a reality to be lived.

Commendations:

1. The visiting team commends the faculty and administration for taking steps to ensure that their families understand and support the school's mission statement.

2. The visiting team commends the administrative staff for clearly communicating the mission statement in its brochure, promotional materials, policy and procedural handbooks, and on the school website.

3. The visiting team commends the school for a well written, concise Mission Statement.

The standard is met.

MSA STANDARD 1: PHILOSOPHY/MISSION

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

The standard is met.

The Community Study

St. Maurice School was founded in 1953 by the Sisters of Mercy to serve the students and families of the parish, Forest Hills and surrounding areas. The school campus can accommodate 600 students; but, at present, serves only 266 children due to population decline, relocation of families, increased tuition costs, and the state of the present economy. The growing trend in alternative education, including a cyber school, a Propel school, and a public school district has also drawn students away from St. Maurice. Studies indicate that within the next five years it is probable that the student population will continue to decline to about 218 students. The Committee study of retention rates, however, showed a positive trend indicating that 75% of the student body from Kinder-

garten through grade 8 completed the full 9 years in the school.

Terra Nova Test results show that student performance is consistently above both national and Diocesan averages. These scores play a positive role in the recruitment of potential students and the retention of present ones. These tests and the Scholastic Readiness Tests are administered in the spring. Individual test results are sent home to the parents, but are also explained at the annual Open House. Test results are posted in the school newsletter, in the Church bulletin and in recruitment publications. Teachers are available for conferences with parents to discuss the results if necessary or requested. Test results are used to determine class scheduling and grouping. Results are also used to recommend students for Title I, GATE, and other special needs programs. Teachers also analyze the results and adjust their curriculum according to individual and group needs.

Family involvement is also necessary for the survival of a thriving institution. An active Parent/Teacher Guild, professional guest speakers, monthly newsletters, and special needs programs provide opportunities for parents to volunteer and to observe that their children are receiving the best support services available in religious practices, education, special needs, and extra-curricular activities. Parents can volunteer for meetings, fund raising events, coaching, chaperoning, assisting in teacher sponsored events such as school musicals and the annual Shakespeare play, and being present at weekly Mass with their children; but, parent volunteer presence presents a difficulty in single parent families or when both parents find it necessary to work and/or even work two jobs.

Various institutions in the community offer special services. Included in these are Children's Hospital, local police and fire departments, the Coast Guard, and the Woodland Hills EMS which address safety and health issues; the local library; Sierra Catholic Students who teach Junior Achievement; and professional musicians.

The students participate in musical events during Forest Hills Light Up Night, at Carnegie Music Hall, and at the Creche in downtown Pittsburgh. They are also involved in local Arbor Day and Memorial Day celebrations and the Parish festival. Caring and sharing are shown through participation in visits to nursing homes, Sarah Center, and making and sending cards to veterans.

St. Maurice School stays connected with the public through its website which provides basic information about the school, information in the Church bulletin, and releases to local newspapers and television stations. Currently a position has been added for further outreach and PR. The school also used a **ONE CALL SYSTEM** to remind parents of upcoming events and to alert them to emergency situations.

Cooperation with other schools and agencies is necessary for success. The students are active participants in forensic tournaments, a Diocesan spelling bee, the Pennsylvania Junior Academy of Science, and competition on sports teams. Watson Institute and other agencies provide TSS services. A therapeutic support staff is present in the classroom to aid the students with academic and/or behavioral problems and is in constant contact with the teachers to provide advice and assistance; Catholic Charities is involved through neighborhood based services.

Commendations:

1. The visiting team commends the school for recognizing the reasons for declining enrollment and the need for a solution to remedy the situation.

2. The visiting team commends the school for using test results to address individual student needs and for recruitment purposes.

3. The visiting team commends the school for making concerted efforts to involve families in more active participation in the school community.

4. The visiting team commends the school for utilizing school support services and participating in local and regional religious, educational, social, patriotic, sharing and caring projects, and in sports activities.

Recommendations:

1. The visiting team recommends that the school continue to track enrollment and to seek additional ways to publicize the school to draw additional students.

2. The visiting team recommends that the school begin to consider a plan to provide a program that feeds into St. Maurice School.

3. The visiting team recommends that the school community seek additional ways to encourage more student participation in-school and in extra-curricular activities.

4. The visiting team recommends that the school community generate ways to increase the presence of more parent volunteers both for school and for extra-curricular activities.

The standard is met.

The Student Services and Student Activities

St. Maurice provides a variety of Student Services and Activities for Students
Food Service_

Adequate nutritional requirements of the students of St. Maurice School are addressed in the health classes and by the cafeteria choices and services. Lunch is provided with a variety of "good choice" diet for students. Employees are hired by the school to manage and provide for students. The manager is "state certified," and makes up menus, orders the food, pays the bills and does the necessary paperwork for reimbursement from the Government. The menu follows the guidelines of the State of Pennsylvania.

Transportation Services

Transportation, in the form of busing, is provided by the Public School District for those students who live within a 10 mile radius of the Public School. Some of the districts provide busing on early dismissal days. Other methods of transportation include children transported by automobiles and walking. Students are provided busing for field trips and the eighth grade annual trip to Washington, DC.

Classes are divided into smaller groups and supervised by the teachers or an adult for field trips and the school district is responsible for students on the daily bus trips to and from school. Teachers monitor the boarding of school buses after school. The arrival of students from buses is monitored by the driver of the bus. Walkers are led to the perimeter of the school and are staff safely crosses those students. The school offers traffic safety education through the local Fire Department, and the Officer Phil national program is sponsored locally by the Police and Fire Department as a two year safety program in school.

Health Services_

A school nurse is from the local school district and maintains the health records of each student. Once a year the nurse records the personal general health of students including height, weight, BMI, eye and hearing exams. When requested, a nurse will come and monitor and check for head lice. She reviews immunization records. An orthodontist visits once a year and checks bite for braces and spacers. One day a month a nurse provides service

to the school. Other times the office maintains necessary services. Health records are maintained in locked file cabinets. Parents provide a note from a doctor and/or pharmacy with medication and the directions for administration. Medications are placed in a sealed storage bag with student's name and homeroom. Medications are given to the secretary and placed in a secure area. The medications may be dispensed by the school secretary, principal, or teacher on office duty. Students receive health instruction once a week which responds to the developmental needs of students.
The school provides an area for a sick child. An AED device is located outside of the cafeteria. There is also one placed in the gym. There are a variety of community health services available to the school, such as, Mr. Yuk Program, Children's Hospital Discovery program, DARE, Elks Poster Contest on Drugs, Health Class, Health for Life (grades 1 -2), and Totally Awesome Health (Grades 3-8). AIDS and Sex Education uses the Catholic Vision of Love Program for grades 5, 6, 7, 8 and a science class on Viruses in grade 7. Since services are provided by the local school district, the school has little control over these services.

Guidance/Counseling Services_

A counselor is provided by the Allegheny Intermediate Unit and is available once a week to meet with students individually or in groups. Student Assistance Program (SAP) is well-functioning within the school. SAP represents all levels in the school. A counselor from AIU will meet with eighth grade on a regular basis to help prepare for high school. A parent can refer a student to the counselor by contacting the school or counselor directly. A student can self refer as well. If teacher is referring, the problem or behavior is noted. The parent has a conference with the teacher before any action is taken. Appropriate forms are used for recommendation and all involved are requested to complete an academic or behavioral questionnaire. The SAP team meets and reviews procedures and courses of action. Parents are asked to sign forms allowing the process to continue and a release of information. A locked file cabinet is kept for the information which is provided by the Allegheny Intermediate Unit, sensitive information is dispensed to teachers on a "need to know" basis. Any information that is disclosed to or from the community agencies must have the written permission of the parent/guardian. The Allegheny Intermediate Unit is always available to the school, CACTUS service is a twenty-four hour child intervention response team. Various Allegheny County Intervention resource agencies are available to the school. This Unit is always providing information about appropriate guidance/counseling services and testing.

Special Services

There are a variety of methods for identification of special education students including learning disabilities, physical disabilities and gifted students. Diocesan Academic Support Program (Special Needs Program) - Development of Growth Plan which addresses accommodations and adaptations, based on testing/teacher recommendation. AIU, Reading and Math Specialist Programs, AIU Speech Program, Equitable Participation Program, which provides for assistance to teachers, are available again through AIU. Public School District Evaluation for Learning Disability and other such programs for gifted students through Woodlands Hills school district as well as other Public School districts are available for students, parents and teacher.

Recruitment, Admissions, and Placement of Students

Recruitment, Admission, and Placement of students are critical to the school. Efforts include advertising in local newspapers and certainly promoted by "word of mouth". The church bulletin includes students' achievements, and the school web site includes information regarding Open House and the admission process. A school newsletter is published and circulated in the church bulletin and pre-school round up. An ice cream social is held during the month of October as a promotion of the Kindergarten program. A placement test determines the Math and Science placement for sixth, seventh and eighth grades. Age policy by the local public school districts is followed.

Student Activities: Extended Day

St. Maurice has an Extended Day with a Director. There is an additional fee for students. There is a comfortable, large space for students after school with activities and there is a spiritual component as well. Children have homework time as well as free play and snack. There are planned activities and projects available as well.

Commendations:

1. The visiting team commends the school community for providing a well rounded complement program for students.

2. The visiting team commends the school community for providing a variety of support and resources from outside agencies for screening students.

3. The visiting team commends the school community for providing special opportunities and clubs throughout the school by various faculty to ensure that additional needs of students are met.

Recommendations:

1. The visiting team recommends that the school community analyze the menu to ensure that there is a well balanced diet and find nutritional substitutes for snacks.

2. The visiting team recommends the school community improve the overall safety of students who are walking and transported by bus as indicated by the self study.

3. The visiting team recommends the school community provide for updated availability of counseling services to faculty/parents, and coordinate information between guidance/counseling and administration and faculty on a timelier basis.

The standard is met.

MSA STANDARD 11: STUDENT LIFE AND STUDENT ACTIVITIES

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

The Educational Program Study

Art

A committee of Art teachers met to develop the present Diocesan curriculum. Research has been done to better use the National Standards for Visual Arts. Workshops are offered to assist Art teachers in implementing the curriculum. The art teacher provides an environment that fosters and develops creative thinking through inquiry, experimentation, and personal expression. Students also learn aesthetic judgment, experience success, learn the value of work, and gain self confidence. They also learn the purpose of art, the techniques of artists, and career opportunities that involve art. Skills developed are carried on to other classes. Classes begin with a prayer, and Catholic themes and values are incorporated into lessons.

Commendations:

1. The visiting team commends the school community for the vast amount and variety of student work displayed throughout the school.

2. The visiting team commends the school community for participating in contests in and outside of the school community.

Recommendations:

1. It is recommended that the art teacher be given the opportunity to become better prepared in computer generated graphic arts and to participate in in-service programs in Art History and Art Theory.

2. It is also recommended that a Smart Board be added for the art teacher to facilitate the teaching of art history, style, and technique.

The standard is met.

Language Arts

The Language Arts curriculum was designed by a committee of Language Arts teachers who met with the Diocesan Language Arts Consultant to develop a curriculum based on research, best practices, and the Pennsylvania Department of Education Standards. The Language Arts teachers of St. Maurice reviewed available texts and resources and recommended to the principal their choices.

The curriculum at St. Maurice includes Reading, Writing, English, and Spelling skills taught within the context of Literature as the Integrated Language Arts Curriculum. All genres of writing are taught beginning in Kindergarten. Writing, which is integrated in all areas of the curriculum, is evaluated in grades K – 8 through the annual writing assessment for the Diocese of Pittsburgh. Grades seven and eight also use the Criterion Writing Assessment program.

Formal penmanship is a regular part of Language Arts in grades K – 5 beginning with printing in Kindergarten and with cursive introduced in grade two. Cursive instruction and practice are reinforced in grade seven.

Library visits are begun in Kindergarten with the teachers of that grade accompanying their children to the library on a weekly basis. Weekly classes for grades 1 – 6 are taught by the school librarian who assists the students in selecting books of different genres. The seventh and eighth grade students' work on internet research based on topics related to the novel the students are currently reading. This is supervised by the Language Arts or upper

grade teachers.

Media Literacy and Drama are part of the 5 – 8 curriculums. This includes the reading of a Shakespearean play and the presentation of one. This helps students develop higher order and creative thinking skills.

Commendations:

1. The visiting team commends the school community for providing a curriculum that encompasses all areas of communication: reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

2. The visiting team commends the school community for providing an appreciation of literature with guidance in choosing a variety of books and in being introduced to Shakespeare.

3. The visiting team commends the school community for encouraging creative writing through poetry, essays, critical writing and research.

Recommendations:

1. The visiting team recommends that the teachers find a way to collaborate more closely so that a transition is made more smoothly across grade levels.

2. The visiting team recommends that Media Literacy be expanded to all grades.

3. The visiting team recommends that the computer lab be made available for all classes.

4. The visiting team strongly recommends that a program of increased reading of chapter books of both fiction and non-fiction genres are incorporated into the Language Arts program with the students in grades 5 – 8 reading at least one such book per month. A summer reading list might also be handed out to grades K – 5 and expanded in grades 6 and 7 before school is dismissed in June.

The standard is met.

Religion

The religion curriculum at St Maurice is implemented through the Catechetical curriculum "Faith First" both in planning and presenting lessons. Message, Morality, Community, and Worship are addressed within the context of Religion. Gospel values are integrated in all areas of the curriculum as is the teaching of Morality as a regular part of student life. Specific objectives are reinforced through direct instruction. Students are aware that they are vital members of a faith community in which they are each called to reach out in witness and service to the communities of which they are a part.

Students have the opportunity to experience God through prayer, liturgy, Bible stories, liturgical seasons, saints' celebrations, and participating in prayer services and the sacraments. Doctrinal and historical aspects of the Faith are taught beginning in kindergarten and extending through grade eight. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered during Advent and Lent. The Catholic Vision of Love is part of the student program. Second graders prepare for Reconciliation and First Communion, while eighth graders prepare for Confirmation in part at a Retreat. Stations of the Cross are said during Lent. The students attend Mass weekly and are also visited by one of the priests on a weekly basis. Students also participate in charity events such as visitations to Senior Citizens Facilities, a parish Giving Tree at Christmas, and a Catholic Charity gift giving program.

The Consultant for Elementary Catechesis meets with a committee of Religion teachers to develop the religion curriculum. Research and best practices are periodically explored and workshops and classes are offered to assist teachers in the implementation of the curriculum. The Diocese of Pittsburgh requires catechetical certification and offers Faith formation classes to fulfill part of this requirement. Teachers also receive copies of *Today's Catholic Teacher* each month. Liturgical experiences and days of reflection are offered to the teachers throughout the year.

Concepts from the guidelines are taught in whole and small groups, through role-playing, drama, prayer experiences, journaling, cooperative learning and think-pair-share. Class participation, memorization of formal prayers, putting religious values into action, participation in prayer services, and ACRE testing in grades 5 and 8 are all ways used to assess learning and growth.

Materials used in the classrooms include the curriculum texts, music CDs/videos, religious crafts, prayer tables, Children's Bibles, Sacramentals such as Rosaries, Crucifixes, and statues.

Commendations:

1. The visiting team commends the school community for their dedication to the religious training of their students which is obvious in their class recitations, their concern and respect for each other, their friendliness and courtesy shown toward visitors.

2. The visiting team commends the school community for building a Faith community through prayer services, worship, service projects, religious objects, posters, signs displayed in the rooms, and for being role models for the students.

Recommendations:

1. The visiting team recommends that the teachers continue to encourage more parental involvement in the Faith Formation program.

2. The visiting team recommends that the Gospel value being taught be clearly displayed in the classroom and that the value continues to be emphasized beyond the introduction in all classes.

The standard is met.

Library

Students in grades 1 – 6 go to the Library on a weekly basis. They are taught Library Skills, parts of the book, types of books (genres), authors, the Dewey Decimal System and information about the card catalog. Students in grades 7 and 8 go to the computer lab for their Library period. They use the computer as a research tool for the Language Arts classes. Kindergarteners attend the library with their own teachers. Books in grades 1 – 6 are selected through research, consulting with teachers, and individual student preference. Book reports, charts listing books read, and creative materials such as games are used to encourage reading. The librarian is responsible for the current library curriculum now in use in grades 1 – 6.

Commendations:

1. The visiting team commends the school for the curriculum developed to address the needs of students on all levels of need and experience.

2. The visiting team commends the school for providing for the variety of teaching methods, the pleasant atmosphere and arrangement of the hundreds of volumes available to the students, and the attractiveness of the library with its display of posters and student work.

Recommendations:

1. It is recommended that the computer system be improved and updated.

2. It is also recommended that Non-Fiction resources continue to be added in fields such as Technology, Science, Biography, Religion, and to provide and improve research materials.

The standard is met.

Math

The math curriculum of St. Maurice School was developed by a committee of educators consisting of teachers, administrators, university, staff and educational consultants for the Diocese of Pittsburgh. The committee used "Professional Standards for Teachers of Mathematics", the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics documents, and many state documents on math standards to develop a math curriculum that meets the needs of today's educational program.

Before the new curriculum guidelines were adopted, the revised materials were sent to all math teachers in the Diocese in order to make suggestions to add or delete certain standards.
The new textbooks that were purchased for grades 4 – 8 last year met all the standards developed in the newly revised curriculum. The textbooks were also on the approved textbook list that has been adopted by the Diocese of Pittsburgh. Software applications for their Smartboards have been purchased to accompany the new textbook in the upper elementary grades.

The math curriculum at St. Maurice School is coordinated both horizontally and vertically. The student's progress from grade to grade is tracked and increasingly shows students' advanced knowledge and understanding of mathematics. The students are presented with problem situations that are increasingly more complex. The students are required to make connections to and across functions of everyday living skills. Teachers communicate with each other to ensure that the curriculum contributes to a logical transition from one grade level to the next. Students are challenged by the use of differentiated instruction when the homogeneous groupings within the classroom.

Commendations:

1. The administration and faculty is to be commended for updating the basal text to meet the needs of the students in the upper elementary grades.

2. The faculty is to be commended for integrating the gospel values into the curriculum through teacher's modeling and peer tutoring. The Catholic environment promotes academic excellence in relationship to the students' individual potential.

3. The faculty is to be commended for challenging the students to a degree that their scores on the Terra Nova Achievement test are above both national and diocesan norms.

Recommendations:

1. The visiting team recommends investigating ways of increasing time for math instruction on a daily basis by either lengthening the allotted time for math or by integrating math concepts into other subject areas.

2. The visiting team recommends that the faculty and administration investigate a means of updating textbooks in the primary department in order to maintain consistency to meet the standards within the curriculum guidelines.

3. The visiting team recommends that the administration find means of offering staff development in the area of technology. More emphasis should be place on the use of the Smartboard within the math curriculum.

The standard is met.

Social Studies

The Social Studies curriculum of St. Maurice School has been developed by the Diocese of Pittsburgh and is the base line of the curriculum. The teachers coordinate the sequence and pace what they cover with their students at their specific grade level. The Social Studies curriculum begins informally in Kindergarten and continues formally in Grades 1 through 8.

The faculty uses a variety of teaching techniques to present new concepts to the students. The students learn how people interact with one another from the most basic levels to eventually world-wide levels, developing an awareness of society. As students continue into the upper grades, basic information and skills are expanded.

Commendations:

1. The visiting team commends the school for using different assessment tools to give each student the opportunity to succeed.

2. The visiting team commends the school for using a variety of teaching methods such as books, lectures, discussions, group work, technology, and hands-on projects to meet the needs of each child.

Recommendations:

1. The visiting team recommends that all faculty members incorporate technology to enhance the social studies curriculum.

2. The visiting team recommends that the students participate in more educational field trips at all grade levels. These field trips would enrich and enhance the social studies curriculum.

3. The visiting team recommends that the faculty update textbooks as needed and incorporate current events in social studies classes.

The standard is met.

Science

The Science Curriculum encompasses concept formation and processes expressed in the behavioral objectives. Concept formation is an organized system of information. In essence the school uses scientific inquiry, the scientific process steps. New textbooks have been updated in the past three years, and there are supplies for experiential learning in the 7/8 grade lab, as well as classrooms.

Commendations:

1. The visiting team commends the school for providing a rigorous science program.

2. The visiting team commends the school for promoting the State and National Standards and participating in regional and state science fairs for the upper grades

3. The visiting team commends the school for promoting Hands-on activities

4. The visiting team commends the school for providing and accommodating all students with experiential science instruction

Recommendations:

1. The visiting team recommends that the school integrate math into the science curriculum in order to increase time allotment for math in the daily schedule.

2. The visiting team recommends less reliance on textbooks in the classes, and ensuring that all classes including the lower school incorporate Hands-On experiential learning and become more consistent in that area across the grade areas as much as possible.

3. The visiting team recommends the school continue to increase uses of technology for science classes.

4. The visiting team recommends the school continue to provide the resources for teaching an inquiry based science throughout the curriculum.

The standard is met.

Health

St. Maurice school uses "Totally Awesome Health" as their basal series. Totally Awesome Health was adopted by the school in the Diocese of Pittsburgh in 2001. It maintains the consistency of health standards that are used by the National Health Education standards. In order to update the health curriculum, the school uses the *Current Health* magazine as a supplemental health program. This magazine helps keep health information updated and reviewed. The school adheres to the health curriculum developed by the Diocese of Pittsburgh. These guidelines include personal hygiene, safety, healthy eating habits and diseases.

The gospel values are integrated into the curriculum by teaching the students to tell the truth, show respect, be fair, and develop a good self-respect and character. Everyone is taught that they are unique and made in God's image.

Other outside activities are used to enhance the health program. Some of the activities are read and used for the 5th and 8th grades on Drug Prevention from the local Elks organization, CD's from he American Heart Association are used to learn new jump rope techniques and routines to up-beat music. Conflict resolution skills are taught to teach students how to work through their problems.

The health program consists of a carefully planned and well-executed curriculum that includes appropriate activities at each grade level. The educational program is aligned with the schools mission statement and is periodically reviewed by the teachers. The written curriculum guidelines, although not current, are functional, available, and in use.

Commendations

1. The visiting team commends the school for using outside resources, on-line learning and hands on activities to enhance the health curriculum.

2. The visiting team commends the school for using skits and physical activities for specific lessons in order to supplement the *Totally Awesome Health* curriculum.

3. The visiting team commends the administration for purchasing *Current Health* to keep the health curriculum up-to-date.

Recommendations:

1. The visiting team recommends the use of technology, such as internet activities on the Smartboard, to supplement the dated curriculum.

2. The visiting team recommends that the administration investigate ways of purchasing anatomical models and body system kits to give the student the opportunity to participate in hands-on-activities.

3. The visiting team recommends utilizing the computer lab for specific health lessons.

The standard is met.

Spanish/ French World Language Program

The Spanish and French program is offered grades 5 -8 on a twice a week basis. Currently, grades 2, 3 and 4 have been added for a semester. Fifth grade students split by semester taking Spanish then French. At the sixth grade level a preferred language is selected and followed through grade eight. There is on staff a Spanish and French teacher. The program is developed by the Diocesan World Language Coordinator and the committee in which World Language teachers developed a curriculum. Teachers attend various World Language Seminars which assists them in the implementation of new teaching techniques.

Lessons are adapted to the individual students needing assistance and are a part of those students learning plan this is done in coordination with the Special Needs coordinator. The school has purchased new text books. Language concepts and skills are taught, reviewed, and built upon as the students advance. They use the Total Physical Response method in the introduction of the target language. Various methods enhance the learning process which may include tapes, CD, games, visual aids, maps, etc.

Commendations:

1. The visiting team commends the school for providing a foreign language program.

2. The visiting team commends the school for providing flexible scheduling for accommodating foreign language.

3. The visiting team commends the school for including foreign language class for those students who need accommodations because of learning differences

Recommendations:

1. The visiting team recommends the school ensure that the foreign language teachers are included in the actual planning of the foreign language schedule.

2. The visiting team recommends the school expand and provide foreign language on a twice weekly basis for grades K-2-3-4.

3. The visiting team recommends the school provide for a dedicated foreign language classroom.

The standard is met.

Music

The music program is comprehensive. All components for the Diocesan Music Curriculum: National Standards, Concepts, Student Objectives, Criteria for Evaluation, Theory, Music, History, Vocal, Instrumental, recommended text and auxiliary material are included. A certified music instructor is employed and students with special needs are able to fully participate in the program. A complete and well equipped music room is designated for the subject area.

Commendations

1. The visiting team commends the school for providing a certified music teacher for classes.

2. The visiting team commends the school for providing a fully equipped music room.

3. The visiting team commends the school for providing music performance, including choral and instrumental concerts and seasonal programs.

Recommendations:

1. The visiting team recommends the school consider adding musical equipment to the program, i.e. Orff, etc.

2. The visiting team recommends that classroom teachers who teach music coordinate efforts with the music teacher for in-service in music history and theory, world music, and music technology as stated in the self study report.

The standard is met.

Physical Education

The Physical Education program follows the Diocesan Curriculum. All revised curricular updates are sent to all PE teachers. The teachers review the information and make comments and suggestions to add or delete information. Once completed it is sent back for revision and to ensure that it meets the PA Standards. New programs included several new initiatives including Healthy Kids Challenge, VITAL Program, Diocesan Pedometers Program/Highlight Blue Cross-Blue Shield to name a few. Major techniques for instruction are age appropriate and include activities for Primary, Intermediate, and the Middle/Junior High. Evaluation is made to determine if the PE education curriculum is meeting needs calculated by physical fitness, sports knowledge, weight control, lifetime skills exposure and sportsmanship. The philosophy of the program proclaims Christian values that "winning at all costs" is not the main goal of the program or sports program that the school supports.

Commendations:

1. The visiting team commends the school for providing a robust Physical Education program.

2. The visiting team commends the school for providing the concept that Christian teamwork is used to obtain common goals while respecting individual diversity.

3. The visiting team commends the school for promoting self discipline as well as self esteem among the students.

Recommendations:

1. The visiting team recommends the school provide professional development opportunities for P.E. teachers.

2. The visiting team recommends the school encourage the communication among Physical Education teachers in other diocesan schools.

3. The visiting team recommends the school continue to add to the equipment which will enhance the aerobic and cardio endurance goals as stated in curriculum guidelines.

The standard is met.

MSA STANDARD 8: EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

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

Comments:

The Educational program is well defined. Teachers seem to have an excellent grasp of best practices. We saw evidence of that throughout the school. However, emphasis on differentiation and further integration of subject area within the classroom or in particular classes should be practiced and perfected. This may also be promoted through collaboration across grades and grade levels which is critical for success! Curriculum mapping will assist in the planning and the even flow. Subject level coordinators would ensure planning, and promote dialog. Addressing student differences in the 6-7-8th grades by student tracking may not be the best method to address the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive goals for students. Teachers would benefit from professional development in these areas of differentiation and integrating subject areas. Because the school has the advantage of low student/teacher ratio the ground is fertile for teacher articulation of these techniques.

The standard is met.

The Leadership and Organization Study

St. Maurice school operates according to the diocese of Pittsburgh set out by the Catholic Schools Office. The CSO provides an educational consultant who works in concert with the school as a liaison. The Pastor and Principal meet and the Pastor encourages the Principal's leadership and relegates the operation to her. The Pastor with the Principal and financial team from the parish generates and approves the budget. The school's climate and culture are indicative of the school's philosophy "Christian community is not merely a concept to be taught, but a reality to be lived."

Commendations:

1. The visiting team commends the school for providing a mutually respectful relationship between the Pastor and Principal

2. The visiting team commends the school for providing leadership in the development and perpetuation of the religious nature of the school and its faith community

3. The visiting team commends the school for creating a respectful climate among the faculty, staff and students

Recommendations:

1. The visiting team recommends the Pastor and Principal together with stakeholders create a plan for the possible scenarios; i.e. addition of preschool or regionalization

2. The visiting team recommends the administration provide for curriculum co-ordinators for each major subject area in order to create ongoing dialog among levels to promote cooperation, respect and for sharing information

3. The visiting team recommends the administration and faculty create a curriculum map in order to facilitate coordination across the curricular area

The standard is met.

MSA STANDARD 12: INFORMATION RESOURCES AND TECHNOLOGY

The Educational Program Study

Technology

The Computer curriculum at St. Maurice School encompasses concept formation and process expressed in the objectives at each grade level. The curriculum has a comprehensive hands-on approach to student learning. The objectives at each grade level are sequential and correlated with the Pennsylvania State Standards.

St. Maurice School has a formal technology plan that is submitted and approved by the Diocese of Pittsburgh. The computer teacher reviews and selects materials that are appropriate for each grade level. The lessons and assigned projects are determined by student ability and are built on prior knowledge of computer skills. Many times the students are asked to create Power Point presentations or other projects that require higher order thinking skills.

The faculty stresses internet safety as part of the Technology curriculum. The gospel values are integrated into the computer curriculum and are enhanced by an on-line site provided by the publisher of the school's Religion program. As in all Catholic Schools, the goals are accomplished in the context of the school's Catholic philosophy of education.

Commendations:

1. The visiting team commends the school community for integrating technology throughout the curriculum. Technology is not an isolated skill.

2. The visiting team commends the school community for striving to continually update hardware/software.

3. The visiting team commends the school community for adhering to all practices and policies set for by the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

Recommendations:

1. The visiting team recommends that the administration investigate the possibility of hiring a part-time person or have access to a person to help solve technology problems throughout the school day.

2. The visiting team recommends that administration provides more technology professional development opportunities throughout the school year.

3. The visiting team recommends that the finance council investigate sources of funding to accomplish the needs of the school's technology program.

The standard is met.

FACILITIES

St. Maurice School was founded in 1953 by the Sisters of Mercy to serve the students and families of St. Maurice Parish, Forest Hills, and surrounding areas. The main building was constructed in 1953 and opened for school in September of that year. Several years later, eight classrooms were added to accommodate the growing enrollment. The library, which is housed in the Parish Center, was created in 2000.

The most recent addition was a free standing gym was built in 2003. The former gym was converted into two separate areas, one for the after-care school program and the other for A. I.U. instruction.

All exterior locks in the school building have been updated to meet Fire Safety codes. The classroom doors were also provided with an exterior back as a safety feature.

The school has a modern cafeteria with a stage area that can be used for school performances. The cafeteria is also used by the parish for special events such as: Fish Fry, Breakfast with Santa/Easter Bunny, Summer Festival meals and games, youth group events, and large group parent meetings.

Commendations:

1. The visiting team commends the administration for updating the building to meet all safety requirements as described in the Safe school Crisis Handbook developed by the Diocese of Pittsburgh. The handbook outlines all emergency procedures for St. Maurice School.

2. Lighting has been updated and is adequate and appropriate in student and staff areas.

3. The visiting team commends the parish for updating the facilities as need and for maintaining the building on a regular basis to meet the needs of the school community.

Recommendations:

1. The visiting team recommends that the administration updates its written procedures and functional equipment with which to communicate during fire and other emergencies, to summon assistance, and to evacuate the school's facilities.

2. The visiting team recommends that the administration in-service all staff members on how to implement emergency and crisis plans, handle accidents, illnesses, and prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

3. The visiting team recommends that the students traveling to and from the school gym and to the church need to be under stricter supervision for security reasons.

The standard is met.

MSA STANDARD 5: FACILITIES

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

The standard is met.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Procedures for daily admission and dismissal of students are practical, safe, and well practiced. The principal and faculty involvement is paramount and evident. Classrooms, restrooms, hallways, common areas, and kitchen are well maintained and clean. Health and safety requirements are posted in the office and copies are contained in classrooms, readily accessible to administration teachers and staff. Emergency procedures and crisis management policies are clearly composed and readily available in office and classrooms.

The education program at St. Maurice includes opportunities for student to develop knowledge, attitudes, and practices necessary for personal wellness and a healthy lifestyle.

Commendations:

1. The administration is to be commended for conducting and maintaining written records of emergency drills, students' health and or physical needs, and providing the school with a Crisis Emergency manual.

2. The maintenance staff is to be commended for making St. Maurice a safe, orderly, and healthy environment for teaching and learning.

Recommendations:

1. The visiting team recommends that the faculty member on morning cafeteria duty should lock the outside door before returning to his/her classroom. All late students should be admitted in for security reasons.

2. The visiting team recommends that a system be implemented to account for the whereabouts of students at all times.

3. The visiting team recommends that the school put into place an effective system to control access to the school by visitors and other non-school personnel.

The standard is met.

MSA STANDARD 7: HEALTH AND SAFETY

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

The standard is met.

FINANCES

St. Maurice School faces many challenges in regards to finances. The school's Finance Council works diligently to meet the required formulas set forth by the Diocese of Pittsburgh in order to stabilize the financial drain the school has been on the parish community. The formula used by the Diocese of Pittsburgh is as follows:

Tuition Yield:	60% of the school budget
Parish Subsidy:	25% of the school budget
Fundraising:	10% of the school budget
Diocesan Subsidy/ Donations& bequest	5% of the school budget

The financial resources for St. Maurice School are sufficient to provide the educational opportunities defined in the school's mission statement. The business practices of the school are ethical.

Commendations:

1. The visiting team commends the parish for their continued support of the school by taking an active part in all the fundraising efforts made by the school.

2. The visiting team commends the faculty and staff for their sacrifices and dedication to Catholic education to keep tuition rates affordable for all families attending St. Maurice School.

3. The visiting team commends the administration and the faculty for the creative use of State (Act 89) and Federal (Title I) moneys which help to reduce expenditures. The acquisition of grants and the outreach to the greater community (EITC Funds) have helped to alleviate the financial burden on the parish.

Recommendations:

1. The visiting team recommends that the finance council to support the initative of Institutional Advancement in order to obtain new, outside sources of income.

2. The visiting team recommends that the school in concert with the finance council hire a full time, experienced Advancement Director whose job would be to raise the necessary funds to continue the operation of St. Maurice School

3. The visiting team recommends that the finance committee form a subcommittee to evaluate programs presented at the development seminars offered by the Diocese of Pittsburgh and implement as many as feasible related to outside sources of income.

The standard is met.

MSA STANDARD 4: FINANCES

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

The standard is met.

Summary and Closure

It has been a pleasure to visit St. Maurice. The warm welcoming atmosphere was appreciated, all of our needs were well provided.

We feel that all the key components are in place for a positive future and recognize that outreach has begun for a positive future. The team emphasized the importance of critical planning for their future and the school continues to work on the areas of improvement on the educational component. We wish the school well in your work, and hope that the recommendations for the future direction of the school are beneficial.

Commendations:

1. The visiting team commends the school for clearly communicating the strong mission statement and the Christ centered family atmosphere created by the administration and faculty.

2. The visiting team commends the school for providing a comprehensive educational program that benefits the children of St. Maurice.

3. The visiting team commends the school for establishing a part time Development position for the critical tasks of Institution Advancement

Recommendations:

1. The visiting ream recommends that the administration along with the pastor work toward a strategic plan for the future of St. Maurice which may include regionalization.

2. The visiting team recommends that the work of Institutional Advancement takes precedent as well as efforts for educational improvement as stated in report's recommendations.

Peer Review Team Schedule

The daily schedule for the visit is to be included here.

Visiting Team Roster

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MAINTAINING THE MOMENTUM

Annual & Mid-Point Reviews

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Conducting Annual Reviews

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

- Determine how many reviews are needed and when they should be scheduled.
- Schedule reviews at times when important performance data from administering the assessments are received (student performance goals).
- Ensure there is adequate time to review data, determine what the data means regarding the school's progress; receive reports regarding the implementation of the action plans; and determine what, if any, revisions need to be made to the action plans.
- Determine how the school will celebrate the successes it has achieved.

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

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

Communicating with School Community Members

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

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

The Mid-Point Review / Visit

- All schools with **Initial Accreditation** will be required to complete a **Mid-Point Review** and host a **Mid-Point Visit**. The report submitted by the school should be 1) complete, 2) show evidence the school has conducted the annual reviews--please attach them to the Mid-Point Report, and 3) show evidence of faithful implementation of the strategic plan for growth and improvement. Mid-Point Review is due into the Middle States office by October 15th. This visit will be conducted at no cost to the school.

- Schools that hold **Re-Accreditation** status will submit the **Mid-Point Review** to Middle States by October 15th

- Upon receiving the school's report, it will be reviewed by the Middle States staff. If 1) the report is complete, 2) the report shows evidence the school has conducted the annual reviews-- please attach them to the Mid-Point Report, 3) the report shows evidence of faithful implementation of the strategic plan for growth and improvement, and 4) there are no monitoring or other issues noted in the Team Report that require an onsite visit, the Middle States staff will notify the school that an onsite **Mid-Point Visit** is ***not required***. However, if a school wishes to receive the feedback and input that can be obtained by an outside reviewer; the school may request to host a one-day Mid-Point Visit. The school will then be responsible for the travel expenses of the reviewer.

- Schools that were given **Accreditation with Stipulations** or **Probationary Accreditation** status will be required to complete the **Mid-Point Review** and host a **Mid-Point Visit**. This visit will be conducted at no cost to the school.

- If a school's **Mid-Point Review** indicates that 1) the report is not complete, and/or 2) the report does not show the school is conducting annual reviews, and/or 3) the report does not show evidence of faithful

implementation of the strategic plan for growth and improvement, and/or 4) there are monitoring or other issues noted in the Team Report that require an onsite visit, the Middle States staff will notify the school that an onsite **Mid-Term Visit** is ***required***. The school will be responsible for the cost of hosting the Mid-Point Visitor.

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

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

The Mid-Point Visit

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

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

Middle States Annual Review and Mid-Point Review

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

School:

Address:

Phone:

Principal/Director:

Annual Review for Year ____ Completion Date:

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

8. For each goal, identify strategies that were determined to be ineffective.

9. Identify changes that were made in the original goals or action plans.

10. Identify goals that have been successfully completed.

11. Identify any goals that were abandoned. Provide reasons for abandonment.

12. When original goals have been achieved or abandoned, new goals and action plans need to be developed. The MSCESS format for the new goals and action plans shall be utilized.

Goal Statement:

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

A similar chart must be developed for each goal.

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

July 26, 2010