

# **SELF-STUDY REPORT – School Profile**

## **A.01 STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS**

Parents' and students' knowledge and attitudes about the school  
Sponsoring organization's knowledge and attitudes about the school

### **Parent survey**

Nativity of Mary School surveyed parents during the fall of 2008 to gather information about their perceptions of the school. Of the 238 families who send their children to Nativity of Mary, 130 surveys were returned, representing 55% percent of school families.

The first part of the survey consisted of 55 questions in five general areas: school climate/environment for learning, academics, school community relations, support for student learning and Catholicity. Parents were asked to rate their satisfaction in those areas with these possible responses: strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, and don't know. Overall, the survey indicates that Nativity of Mary parents have a high satisfaction level with the school: out of 129 respondents who answered that question, 128 (99%) strongly agreed or agreed that they were satisfied overall with Nativity of Mary, while one respondent stated "don't know".

A second section of the survey asked parents for input on their satisfaction with the school's academic subjects and a third section included open-ended questions eliciting comments on what parents valued most about the school, what they would like to see improved and whether they would recommend the school. When parents were asked what they liked about the school, the four most common responses were a strong sense of community, nurturing staff, Catholic values, and strong academics, were stated often. Areas for improvement mentioned by parents included playground safety, nutritional lunches, more technology integration in the classroom and volunteer opportunities for working parents. All but two respondents said they would recommend Nativity of Mary School to others.

After the surveys were returned, two school commission members compiled and analyzed the responses. One member reviewed the comments section and created a list of areas for improvement that parents had cited most often. In November 2008, the school commission established sub-committees to review and address these areas of concern. Those sub-committees will report at monthly school commission meetings during the remainder of the 2008-2009 school year.

### **Student survey**

In December 2008, students in grades three through eight were also given a satisfaction survey about Nativity of Mary School. The survey consisted of 11

questions with the following possible responses: strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, and don't know. The survey asked about students' feelings of safety, communication and relationships among students and staff, curriculum, the learning environment, after-school activities, and Catholic identity. Also included in the survey was one open-ended question: "What is the one thing about Nativity of Mary that you value the most?" A total of 229 surveys were signed and submitted.

Overall, the students at Nativity of Mary are satisfied with the school, as 201 students (88%) agree or strongly agree. Students say they are comfortable talking to the staff about concerns, feel safe and valued, have a sense of belonging, and feel respected. On average, 82% agree or strongly agree with questions regarding safety, relationships, and communication. About 9% of the students disagree or strongly disagree with the questions pertaining to the atmosphere of Nativity, while 9% of the respondents checked "don't know."

Survey results indicate that teachers are meeting the needs of students in the academic areas, that students regard the core subjects as being of high quality and feel the teachers understand their learning strengths and weaknesses. On average, 87% agree or strongly agree with the above statements, while 7% disagree, strongly disagree, or don't know. Nativity students like the after-school activities, which include sports, drama, ski, Legos, and chess clubs: 82% agree or strongly agree that the activity offerings are good. Twenty-nine students (13%) don't know.

On the entire survey, students responded most positively to questions regarding Catholic identity. Students agree or strongly agree (91%) that the school emphasizes the teachings of Christ and promote Christian service to others. Ten percent indicated don't know on the question, "Nativity instills in me the importance of service."

For the open-ended question asking students what they most valued about Nativity of Mary, most students indicated that their friends and teachers were most important to them, with 67 and 50 students responding, respectively. The next six most valued aspects of the school, in order of mention, were: after-school activities, 19; a feeling of belonging, 17; good education, 17; physical education class, 12; and God/Catholic faith/Mass/Fr. Steve, 17.

### **Sponsoring organization's knowledge and attitudes**

Nativity of Mary Church founded the school in 1951 and, in keeping with the philosophy of the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, aims to go beyond academic excellence to educate the whole child. The church's attitude toward the school is in keeping with the stated mission of the Archdiocese, which has 93 elementary schools in 11 counties:

*To develop strong partnerships between home and school that foster academic excellence and fully infuse Catholic teaching and*

*values into every element of the student's educational experience. Each student is given an opportunity to live out his/her faith in service to the larger community, thus providing a foundation for students to become faith-filled, ethical leaders in the local and global community.*

Fr. Steve Ulrick, pastor at Nativity of Mary Church, is a strong supporter of Catholic education and Nativity of Mary School. He came to the parish after many years at St. Hubert Catholic Community in Chanhassen, Minn., which also has a K-8 school. Fr. Steve is actively involved in overseeing the school and leading students' spiritual development in weekly Masses, retreats and other activities.

The school actively works to keep Nativity of Mary Church parishioners informed about and involved in its various activities. Every month a school newsletter, the "News Flash," is placed in the parish bulletin; other inserts and notices about school activities are regularly included in the bulletin as well. Parishioners are invited to participate in school Masses and to volunteer in the school. School children often participate in service projects involving parishioners, including visiting them in local nursing homes and senior centers.

## **A.02 COMMUNITY/NEIGHBORHOOD**

Demographic and growth studies from local community  
Enrollment trends and projections from local school district  
Community issues (crime, business, growth, pending bonds, housing developments)

Nativity of Mary School is located in the City of Bloomington at the corner of 99th Street and Aldrich Avenues. While a neighborhood school, it is located in a central business area and attracts students from throughout the city and several neighboring suburbs.

In recent years, 80-85% of Nativity students have come from Bloomington, with 15-20% from outside the city – primarily Burnsville and Apple Valley (6.5%-8.5%) but additionally in smaller numbers from about 10 other nearby metro area communities. Therefore, while the school is aware of demographics and trends from surrounding suburbs, those of Bloomington have the greatest bearing on enrollment projections and the makeup of the student body. Since neither Burnsville nor Apple Valley have Catholic schools of their own, Nativity focuses its recruitment efforts mainly on those suburbs as well as Bloomington.

### **Demographic and growth studies from local community**

In 2004, Nativity of Mary School completed an in-depth study of local demographics in order to better understand the community and most effectively direct recruitment efforts. In that process, many sources of data were studied including U.S. Census records, city planning statistics, school district and

Archdiocese enrollment trends, etc.

Among the key demographic findings from the 2000 U.S. Census is that the city (total population 85,172) is a mature and aging suburb, with the median age at 40.1 years (up from 33 in 1990) and a declining average household size of 2.3 persons (down from 4.2 in 1960). The portion of city population under 18 years of age is 20.6% – representing a smaller share of children (percentage-wise, though not in total numbers) than in nine of 10 nearby suburbs. This fact further illustrates the aging of the city and underscores the opportunity for Nativity of Mary School to extend its recruitment efforts beyond Bloomington. Nativity of Mary parish data also reflects an aging membership.

From the 1990 to the 2000 U.S. Census, the average annual household income in Bloomington rose 3.4%, to \$69,299. To put this in perspective, Bloomington had the fourth-lowest and third-slowest-growing average income compared with that of 10 other nearby suburbs. In part, this reflects Bloomington's higher number of retirees on fixed incomes.

Bloomington's inhabitants are mostly Caucasian, and this is reflected in Nativity of Mary's student body as well. It may be that there is more socio-economic diversity than racial diversity in both the city and the school itself. U.S. Census statistics from 2000 show the following:

#### Population Statistics by Race

	Caucasian	African American	Native American	Asian/ Pacific Is.	Other
U.S.	75.1%	12.3%	.9%	3.6%	5.5%
Minnesota	89.5%	2.8%	1.2%	2.8%	1.6%
Bloomington	88.1%	3.4%	.03%	5.0%	1.2%

Overall, the percentage of minorities in Bloomington has doubled from 1990 to 2000, including the percentages of African Americans and Asians. In the same years, Bloomington's Caucasian population decreased from 94% percent to 88% while the city's total population decreased only slightly.

#### **Enrollment trends and projections from local school district**

In 2008-2009, Minnesota Bloomington Independent School District #271 has a total student enrollment of 10,207 in grades K-12. Total district elementary and middle school enrollment this school year is 4,493 in grades K-5 and 2,338 in grades 6-8.

Enrollment in the district peaked in the 1960s at 25,000, declining to about 11,000 by 2000. Since then, according to the district's *October 2008 Enrollment Report*, enrollment has continued to show an overall decline (with the exception

of 2005-2006). The rate of decline, however, has been slowing over the past three years:

School Year	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
K-12 Enrollment	10,371	10,498	10,334	10,259	10,207
% Change vs. Prior Year	-1.43%	+1.22%	-1.6%	-.73%	-.51%

Looking ahead over the next five years, the school district estimates that enrollment levels will “flatten out,” with less than 1% declines year over year through 2013-14. This year’s eleventh grade class is the largest in the district with 885 students, while there are successively smaller numbers of students in most grades that follow (e.g., 801 in grade 8; 782 in grade 3; 714 in grade 1). This year’s kindergarten enrollment, however, is up – with 739 students, a 3.2% increase over last year’s kindergarten size. This reflects a beginning of a trend of increasing kindergarten class sizes (1.3%-2.2%) that is expected over three of the next five years.

In addition to the public schools, Bloomington is home to Normandale Community College (6,675 students), Northwestern Health Services University (700), Bethany Missions College (165), Bethany Academy (grades K-6, 97), Bloomington Lutheran (K-8, 234), Lutheran High School (135), Minnehaha Academy (K-5, 120), Mount Hope Redemption Lutheran (preschool-8, 207), and Trinity School (7–12, 396), in addition to Nativity of Mary School. (Source: Bloomington Public Schools; website: [www.bloomington.k12.mn.us](http://www.bloomington.k12.mn.us); and Bloomington Public Schools 2000-2001 Annual Report.)

**Community issues (crime, business, growth, pending bonds, housing developments)**

The major community issue affecting Nativity of Mary School is the aging of Bloomington’s population, which has had an impact on school enrollment levels city-wide.

As noted on the city’s Web site, in the 1950s and 1960s, Bloomington saw the bulk of its population growth as a high percentage of new housing units were purchased by families with young children. Over time, those children moved on and started their own families. The original homeowners often stayed, and now many households are single-occupant.

This trend has resulted in the increasing median age, declining household size and declining numbers of school-age children discussed above. According to city planners, this has also resulted in more limited housing stock available to young families wishing to move into the community – with children who would attend the city’s public or private schools. (Lower interest rates in recent years also have encouraged families with young children to shop for newer, larger homes available in suburbs beyond Bloomington, such as Lakeville or Savage.) The city has recently been working to meet the needs of its aging population by

encouraging the development of more senior housing options, which may result in more single-family homes coming on the market in the future – which could ultimately also bring more school-age children into the community.

### **Other Issues**

**Crime and Safety:** Despite being in a commercial area of the city, Nativity of Mary is a safe environment for students. Except for petty theft (e.g., car break-ins), the area is statistically without much crime. The school has established a number of measures to ensure safety: All parents and other visitors are required to check in at the office and wear a volunteer/visitor tag when in the building during school hours. All doors except the front office door are locked during the school day. Nativity of Mary School pioneered the development of lock-down procedures in conjunction with the Bloomington Police Department. These procedures, now being adopted in public schools state-wide, are practiced at Nativity together with fire drills five times per year.

**Employment:** According to City of Bloomington data, there are more jobs held in Bloomington than there are inhabitants and the total number of persons employed in Bloomington continues to grow. While a large proportion of the jobs are in the retail and restaurant/hotel sector, a number of fairly large diversified businesses join in providing jobs to over 100,000 people. The top five employers in the city are:

Mall of America	13,000 employees
Hotels/Restaurants	11,000
Seagate Technology	2,400
Health Partners	2,164
Bloomington School District	1,767

Overall, with its strong business base, Bloomington continues to maintain a relatively low property tax rate for homeowners. Historically, statistics from the Minnesota Department of Employment & Economic Development show that there is less unemployment in the southwest metropolitan area, including Bloomington, than state-wide and nationally.

### **A.03 STUDENTS**

Current enrollment data for each grade

Changes in enrollment over the past five years (explanation)

Racial/ethnic/religious composition, special needs, disabilities

Overview of alumni relationship

#### **Current enrollment data**

Nativity of Mary School's total enrollment for 2008-2009 is 340 students in grades K-8. By grade, this total breaks down as follows:

Kindergarten	36
Grade 1	30
Grade 2	35
Grade 3	35
Grade 4	37
Grade 5	45
Grade 6	44
Grade 7	37
Grade 8	41

Students are divided into two classes per grade. The maximum number of students allowed in each of Nativity’s kindergarten classes is 20; the maximum in grades 1-5 is 25 per class; in grades 6-8, 26 per class.

**Changes in enrollment over the last five years**

Over the last five years, Nativity of Mary School’s enrollment has decreased from 380 to 340, or a total of approximately 10.5%. The annual enrollment totals, and year-over-year percentages of change, are as follows:

Year	2008-09	2007-08	2006-07	2005-06	2004-05
Enrollment	340	351	367	379	380
% Change vs. Prior Year	-3.1%	-4.4%	-3.2%	-0.26%	-4.3%

This decrease has mirrored a trend among Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis. In recent years, enrollment declines in the range of 5% to 10% per year have not been uncommon for schools in urban areas or older suburbs such as Bloomington. (Within the Archdiocese these are “offset” by new schools in outer suburbs reporting gains as high as 20% or 30% in some recent years as these schools add whole grade levels or additional classes.)

The Archdiocese has attributed these losses to recent economic conditions (unemployment, lack of consumer confidence, effects of the previous recession that lasted into 2002-2003, etc.), a general decline in the population of children, more aggressive recruiting by public schools and the trend of young parents moving to outer suburbs to upgrade housing as their families and incomes grow.

Such economic and demographic factors – including those issues discussed above relating to Bloomington’s aging population base – have certainly played a role in the enrollment decreases at Nativity of Mary School. Moreover, Bloomington is widely known as having a “good” public school district – a factor that might discourage some prospective Nativity families from choosing to pay private school tuition in these tight economic times.

The trend at Nativity, and local public schools as well, is for graduating classes to be larger than the incoming kindergarten classes. In addition, each year some Nativity students do not return to the school, primarily either because (1) their families are moving, (2) they cannot afford tuition, (3) they are transferring to another school, often a public middle school prior to attending a public high school, or (4) they are unhappy with their Nativity experience (historically this has applied to a small minority of cases).

It is interesting to note that Nativity's classes, unlike those of many other private K-8 schools, usually gain in enrollment as they progress through the grades from kindergarten to middle school years. Despite this fact, the net result of all these various variables has been the enrollment losses spelled out above.

In response to this trend, Nativity of Mary has created and implemented marketing/recruitment plans in the last five years with the goal of building greater awareness for the school and maximizing enrollment. A group of volunteer parents with professional backgrounds in marketing, public relations and advertising has developed a variety of promotional tools including newspaper ads and press releases, direct mail campaigns, yard signs, posters, flyers, a new Web site, additional admissions events, window clings and more. These marketing efforts are targeted to both the community in general as well as selected Catholic parishes in Bloomington and neighboring suburbs.

**Racial/ethnic/religious composition, special needs**

In 2008-2009, the **racial/ethnic composition** of the Nativity of Mary School student body is as follows:

Race/Ethnic Background	Number of Students	Percent of Students
African American	9	2.7%
Asian	23	6.8%
Caucasian	290	85.3%
Hispanic	6	1.8%
Native American	1	0.29%
Multi-race	11	3.2%
Total	340	

The racial composition of Nativity fairly closely mirrors that of Bloomington itself (see city population data in A.02); however, the school's enrollment is slightly more diverse, with 85.3% of students identified as Caucasian versus 88.1% of the city's population. The school has a slightly higher percentage of Asians than does the city (6.8% vs. 5.0%, respectively) and a slightly lower percentage of African Americans (2.7% vs. 3.4%, respectively).

Over the last three years, Nativity of Mary has seen increased racial diversity, especially in its incoming kindergarten classes, which no doubt reflects the increasing diversity of Bloomington in general.

Nativity of Mary School and the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis welcome students of all **faith backgrounds**. As might be expected, however, the majority of students at the school (311 students or 91.5%) identified themselves as Roman Catholic on a recent survey of their church affiliation. Most of the remaining 8.5% of students indicated they belong to a Protestant Christian church; some students did not identify any religious affiliation.

Of Nativity of Mary's 275 students who live in Bloomington, 259 (94.2%) attend one of Bloomington's three Catholic churches: 164 students come from Nativity of Mary parish, 76 from St. Edward's parish and 19 from St. Bonaventure parish.

This year, 48.2% of all students enrolled at the school are members of Nativity of Mary parish, compared to 60% in 2004-2005. This reflects a combination of two trends: the decline in numbers of children from within Bloomington in general as well as the growing numbers of students attracted to the school from outside the city (65 students in 2008-2009 vs. 45 in 2004-2005). This increase in students from other suburbs is especially noticeable in the primary grades: This year, 50% of 36 kindergarten students are from outside Bloomington.

Nativity of Mary School currently has 12 students with **special needs**. Of these, seven are receiving special education services from the Bloomington public school district and five have arranged for such services on a private basis.

### **Overview of alumni relationship**

In the recent past, Nativity of Mary parish employed a director of development who began creating a small database of school alumni and had launched a newsletter to build relationships with former students. In the past two years, a school commission member has picked up on communications with alumni and has been adding to the database each year.

This school year, flyers were sent to alumni inviting them to the school's Marathon fundraiser in September. Classrooms were set up during the event where alumni could meet others from their graduating years. Alumni were also invited to participate in the parish's Fall Festival held the same day.

On an annual basis, alumni are welcomed to take part in the school's Spirit of Spring Social and Silent Auction. High school-age alumni are invited to help with the middle school's Courage Retreat held every other year, and many return to Nativity of Mary to complete the volunteer projects that are part of their civics class requirements. The school's Web site also features a section dedicated to alumni.

#### **A.04 FAMILIES**

Socio-economic profile of families (education levels, single parent families, one/two wage-earners, general assistance recipients)

Currently there are 238 families at Nativity of Mary School. Out of respect for family privacy and recognizing the sensitivity of these issues, the school does not survey parents about their education levels, numbers of parents within the family, how many wage earners there are or how many receive general assistance.

The school does note, however, that it has seen an increasing need for financial assistance. This year, there are 46 students receiving free or reduced-cost lunch. This is nearly triple the number (17) in 2006-2007, or a 270% increase.

This current school year, families eligible for school financial aid programs qualified for more than \$230,000.00 in assistance vs. a total of \$190,000.00 available to distribute. In light of this, the school and parish had to increase the funds available to try to maintain families. Some families have withdrawn their children due to financial constraints. Nativity of Mary School and Church is committed to making Catholic education affordable, setting aside \$160,000 to aid parish families with tuition costs. St. Edward's and St. Bonaventure parishes have also set aside \$15,000 for their families. All this money is put into a tuition assistance program, which parents must apply for each year.

#### **A.05 HISTORY**

Highlights within the school history

Review of significant improvement efforts/issues

##### **The Initial Land Acquisition**

Not long after celebrating its first Mass in the Bloomington Town Hall in 1949, the Nativity of Mary parish purchased property from the Elsie Standish farm (roughly in the area of Old Shakopee Road and Aldrich Avenue in Bloomington), and began plans for a parish site of its own. Until 1949, attending Mass in Bloomington still depended on a number of variables; the site and schedule of Masses was very irregular. The only parish serving most of what was then Bloomington Township was Assumption, on the Richfield/Bloomington border.

The founders of Nativity of Mary parish wanted a church that was Bloomington's own and ultimately established a parish on October 31, 1949, when the Articles for Incorporation of the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary were signed by Archbishop Murray. A parish (priests') house was quickly built on the newly acquired property, and it was there that Masses and all parish functions were held during its first year.

##### **The Early Work of Fr. Larkin**

Nativity of Mary began a major building campaign on November 8, 1950, to construct a school under the direction of Fr. Martin Larkin. The building, located next to the priests' house at the corner of 99th Street and Aldrich Avenue, was financed by loans in the amount of \$39,200, and 141 children began attending the school on October 1, 1951. The fact that a school building was constructed before a parish church is symbolic of the importance the parish has for the education of its youth.

The school included six classrooms, a gym, office, kitchen, and library. The school was also used for Mass by setting up folding chairs. Four years later, and with only \$7,000 of its debt retired, Nativity had already outgrown the school building as the number of students had grown to nearly 500 due to the post-war population explosion. A successful parish campaign resulted in the addition of 14 new classrooms, a new dining room, kitchen, and other facilities. In 1958, the parish campus itself grew, as Fr. Larkin announced the purchase of 10 acres of land at 102nd and Lyndale. The purchase was strategic in that it allowed Nativity of Mary's campus to reside within the boundaries of a single large piece of property.

City records indicate that in March 1958, a permit for a church basement at a cost of \$95,000 was issued to Nativity of Mary. While the parish wished for a complete church, it was realistically out of reach at the time. The basement church – still in use today as the parish center and the Creative Clubhouse latchkey program, which serves many school families – was intended to be the foundation of a cathedral style place of worship to be built some years later. In the August 23, 1974, *Catholic Bulletin*, it was fondly referred to as the underground Catholic Church of the Archdiocese.

### **Father Dunn's Legacy**

Father Robert Dunn became the second pastor of Nativity of Mary in June 1964, following the death of Fr. Larkin. He was immediately faced with a parish in debt over a million dollars, and with thousands of children to educate. The number of registered families in the parish had grown to 1,726. The school was at full capacity and also served 4,000 other children who attended public schools, but received their religious education through CCD and catechism classes at Nativity of Mary.

The legacy of Fr. Dunn was considerable. He developed a vision for the future of the parish: the dream of a new church with offices and apartments for priests. He organized the first church finance committee and appointed the first Parish Council. His work made it possible to reduce the parish debt by 1976 and gave rise to the plans for a new standalone church.

### **School Staffing**

The Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet filled many of the faculty positions during the first years of the school's existence. A gradual change to lay classroom

teachers occurred in the 1970s and 1980s. A decrease in enrollments in the early 1970s brought the Archdiocese to propose a joining of Nativity to the three Catholic schools in Richfield: St. Peter's, Assumption, and St. Richard's. In addition, the Sisters of St. Joseph were planning to leave the school. It was considered financially unfeasible to keep the school open. Nativity of Mary parents joined in a campaign to keep the merger from happening, noting that the plan would virtually eliminate Catholic education in Bloomington and very few would have their children bussed the distance to Richfield. The Sisters of St. Joseph agreed to continue staffing the school and after further dialogue the merger plan was dropped. Today, the faculty is made up members of lay persons.

### **The New Church**

Nativity of Mary parish had a third pastor, Fr. John Gilbert, from June 1973 to July 1984. It was under his direction that Nativity built a new church in 1980. The original church basement still stood, but it was determined that the parish had outgrown the size of the church basement.

The newly ordained Fr. Robert Johnson joined Nativity of Mary as an associate in 1977. Except for a year when he served in Chicago as head of the National Federation of Priests Councils, he served at Nativity of Mary from shortly after being ordained in 1976 through 2004. He was named pastor in 1984. In February 1991, a building project was completed under his direction adding a gathering space to the church, additional schoolrooms, parish meeting rooms, an expanded school cafeteria, a new access between the church and school buildings, and an installed a pipe organ in the church. In 2001, a major capital campaign planning process began under Fr. Bob's direction to raise funds for a number of much-needed improvements. In 2004, construction took place including but not limited to: new parish offices, school offices, meeting facilities, repairs to the school roof, a new ventilation system, electrical system, sprinkler system, and new floors.

### **2005 Fr. Steve Ulrick**

Fr. Steve Ulrick joined Nativity of Mary Parish in July of 2005. He was the pastor at St. Hubert's Catholic Church for 14 years. Since coming to Nativity of Mary Parish, he has had a positive impact on the school. In 2007, Fr. Ulrick began a capital campaign for parish and school improvements and to reduce the parish debt; that campaign is currently in progress. Fr. Steve has worked hard to build positive relationships with the staff, parents, and students. He is visible in the school and takes time to interact with students at lunch, in the hallways, and at extracurricular activities. In addition, he has implemented weekly school Masses, Reconciliation, and weekly Stations of the Cross during Lent. Fr. Steve is supportive of the school and a wonderful addition to the school and parish.

Since 1951, Nativity of Mary School has educated generations of students. There continues to be strong parental support and involvement, and an excellent

teaching staff. Over 2,500 students have graduated from Nativity of Mary School.

(Excerpted partly from *Celebrating Fifty Years of Grace: A golden anniversary history*, Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish, Bloomington, Minn., 1999.)

## **Standard 1: Mission and Philosophy**

### *The Vision and Values of a School*

**1.01 MISSION STATEMENT:** The school will have a mission statement that concisely articulates a shared vision for the school community and establishes an overall commitment to a particular course of action.

Nativity of Mary School has a mission statement with a shared vision of educating children in mind, body, and spirit. The school community is guided by the Catholic teachings and is committed to making Jesus Christ known and loved.

### **Nativity of Mary School Mission Statement**

WE BELIEVE:

that we provide our young people with a unique environment that integrates faith and life by engaging them in a variety of daily experiences that foster the development of Christ-centered choices based on gospel values.

that while emphasis on basic skills is essential to effective schooling, of equal importance is our responsibility to give children opportunities to think for themselves, to be curious, to think critically, to be actively involved in learning, and to nurture an appreciation of the value of knowledge and an awareness of God's goodness and glory in nature and the arts.

that a curriculum, the school's road map to excellence, must be sequential and goal-oriented if learning is to take place. Since education should be a meaningful and joyful experience, a curriculum must also offer a variety of enrichment that stimulates self-expression through writing, art, and class discussion.

that teachers are role models who are aware of those "teachable moments" when they can reinforce values of responsibility for self and others, personal dignity, and respect and human compassion.

that effective schooling grows out of a partnership between parents and school staff working cooperatively to establish and implement common goals and visions.

WE BELIEVE that the perennial and time-tested ideals of our Catholic school mission statement are essential to preparing our young people to play an active part in shaping a Christ-centered society of the **21st century**, a society that uses its knowledge to serve humankind and enhance freedom, a society where our children will continue our mission of proclaiming the Gospel of Christ.

**Indicators:**

## Nativity of Mary Mission Statement

**1.02 PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT:** The school will have a philosophy statement that articulates the principles, beliefs and/or core values of the educational program.

Nativity of Mary School has a philosophy statement that supports the school mission statement. The school philosophy creates an environment that meets the needs of individual learners, and articulates social, religious, and academic values. Reverence and respect are fostered throughout the faith community while preparing students for the future.

**Nativity of Mary School Philosophy Statement**

Students, teachers, parents, support staff, and the principal are all gathered at Nativity of Mary School in a faith community whose goal is to educate and nourish the spirits, minds, and bodies of our young people. An essential part of this process is to foster and model reverence and respect for self, others, and the property of this faith community.

As a Catholic school, we strive not only to recognize the individual needs of each student but also to adapt instruction to meet those needs. Because each person is unique, the faculty is conscious of the necessity of providing an environment in which individual students can be challenged and can also succeed. It is the role of the school to complement the home environment in preparing our young people for a Catholic way of life in our society of the present and future.

Therefore, as Catholic educators at Nativity of Mary School and with the support of the parents, we strive to help form strong Christian individuals who will open their minds, hearts, and souls to the religious, social, and academic values needed to bring them happiness and inner peace while enriching the community to which they belong.

**Indicators:**

## Nativity of Mary Philosophy Statement

**1.03 COMMUNICATION OF STATEMENTS:** The school will communicate the mission and philosophy statements to the stakeholders in the school community.

The mission statement and philosophy statements are posted in the school office and in each classroom. In addition, the statements are published in the Nativity of Mary Staff Handbook, the Nativity of Mary Parent and Student Handbook and the Nativity of Mary website: [www.nativitybloomington.org](http://www.nativitybloomington.org). Parents and students are required to read the Parent and Student Handbook every year.

**Indicators:**

Nativity of Mary Parent and Student Handbook

Nativity of Mary Staff Handbook

Posted mission and philosophy statements in the school office and in each classroom

Nativity of Mary website [www.nativitybloomington.org](http://www.nativitybloomington.org)

**1.04 USE OF STATEMENTS:** The school will provide evidence that the mission and philosophy statements guide the school's goals, processes, policies, and procedures.

Evidence that the mission and philosophy statements guide the school's policies, procedures, processes, and goals is shown through the following examples: reviewing the statements with students and staff, reviewing textbook and curriculum, implementing discipline plans, providing opportunities for service, and modeling Christian values.

**Indicators:**

Nativity of Mary Staff Handbook

Code of Conduct and Work Agreement

Homilies at weekly school Masses

Classroom Environment and Staff/Student Interactions

RIGHT Track Theme – Respect, Integrity, God, Honesty, Trust

**1.05 EVALUATION OF STATEMENTS:** The school will have mission and philosophy statements that have been developed by appropriate representatives of the various stakeholders and a shared evaluation process that periodically reviews the effectiveness, relevance and quality of the statements.

A committee was formed to review and rewrite the current mission and philosophy statements seven years ago. The statements were evaluated by several stakeholders: staff, parents, school commission, pastoral parish council, the pastor, and the principal.

**Indicators:**

Meeting Minutes

**SUMMARY: Mission and Philosophy**

Strengths and Challenges

**Strengths**

- Both the philosophy and mission statements address the spiritual, academic, and social aspects as well as the individual members, and community of Nativity of Mary School.

- The mission and philosophy statements are visible in a number of different forms: classrooms, office, website, and handbooks.
- The mission and philosophy are lived out by the school community.

### **Challenges**

- The mission and philosophy statements were written seven years ago and have been periodically reviewed, but need to be rewritten.
- The mission statement is lengthy and not easily cited by the stakeholders.
- The philosophy statement may not be adequate if the mission statement is changed.
- There is not written process for on-going evaluation of the mission and philosophy statements.

## **Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction**

### *The Planning and Implementation of Learning*

**2.01 CURRICULUM HANDBOOK:** The school will have a written comprehensive curriculum handbook that outlines the standards or criteria for students to successfully complete the prescribed educational program; the school's curriculum handbook will be sequentially organized with a demonstrated correlation between grade levels and course topics.

Currently, Nativity of Mary School has an updated (September 2008) curriculum handbook that outlines the curriculum for each grade level. The curriculum is aligned with the McCrel Standards. The handbook has been written in a standardized format and is sequentially organized by grade levels and subjects.

#### **Indicators:**

Curriculum Handbook  
Curriculum Evaluation Schedule  
Curriculum Maps

**2.02 USE OF HANDBOOK:** The school will demonstrate that the written curriculum guides instructional practices.

The Curriculum Handbook is used to guide instructional practices. Lesson plans/units and assessments correlate with the Curriculum Handbook. The teachers have developed curriculum maps that show sequential progression and guide their teaching. The maps correlate with the standards in the curriculum handbook.

#### **Indicators:**

Sampling of Lesson Plans/Units and Assessments  
Curriculum Maps

**2.03 CONTENTS OF CURRICULUM** <sup>LR</sup> The school's curriculum will provide for at least the following subject areas: basic communication skills (including reading, writing, literature, and fine arts); mathematics and science; social studies (including history, geography, and government); health and physical education.

The Nativity of Mary School has a written curriculum for grades K-8 that includes the following subject areas: religion, language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, health, physical education, music, art, computer, and Spanish.

#### **Indicators:**

Curriculum Handbook  
Curriculum Maps  
Curriculum Brochure

## Sample Textbooks and Instructional Materials

**2.04 VARIETY OF INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES:** The school will utilize a variety of instructional practices that accommodate varying learning styles and needs.

The staff uses a variety of instructional practices that accommodate varying learning styles and needs. The staff has participated in professional development in the following areas: Dimensions of Learning, Project Read, Orton Gillingham, Writer's Workshop, differentiated instruction, multiple intelligences, multi-sensory teaching, cooperative learning, Bloom's taxonomy, and brain-based research. These practices are used to accommodate the various learning styles and needs of the students.

Teachers use a variety of instructional practices in their classrooms. In the course of any day, one may see cooperative learning groups, large group, small group and individualized instruction, guided instruction, interdisciplinary and multi-aged instruction, peer tutoring, and inquiry-based instruction. Students may be engaged in learning centers, role playing, music, drama, oral and multi-media presentations, discussions, debates, experiments, research, reflection, journaling, constructing, writing, drawing, hands-on, discovery and experiential learning.

### **Indicators:**

Sample Lesson Plans of Instructional Strategies from Teachers  
Classroom Observations  
Teacher Interviews  
Sampling of Professional Development Certificates

**2.05 CORRELATION WITH MISSION/PHILOSOPHY:** The school's curriculum and instructional practices will reflect the mission and philosophy statements of the school.

The curriculum and teaching practices of Nativity of Mary School encompass the mission and philosophy statements. Acting upon the school's mission and philosophy, the curriculum is sequential and goal-oriented to educate the mind, body and spirit of the students. Nativity of Mary School prepares the students to be life-long learners and responsible world citizens in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Indicators:**

Sample Lesson Plans  
Classroom Observations

**2.06 AWARENESS OF RESEARCH / PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE:** The school's written curriculum will reflect an awareness of current research and professional practices.

The staff attends workshops and seminars to stay current with the best teaching practices. Workshops have included the Writing Workshop, differentiated

instruction, Orton Gillingham method of teaching reading and writing, Project Read, Curriculum Mapper, Dimensions of Learning, brain-based researched, Enlightened Leadership, Insights, Corwin Kronenberg – Teaching Kids to be Responsible, and mental awareness (ADD-ADHD, dyslexia, learning disabilities).

**Indicators:**

Copies of a Sampling of In-Services/Workshops Attended.

**2.07 EVALUATION OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION:** The school will have an established collaborative process for the ongoing evaluation and development of the curriculum handbook, instructional practices, and educational resources.

Each teacher assesses his/her lesson plans and makes adjustments and adaptations that correlate with the curriculum. Grade level teams meet regularly to collaborate on commonly taught subjects. During these grade level meetings, teachers reevaluate lessons and objectives, making sure that goals are achieved. MAT 8 tests given to grades 3, 5, and 7 are analyzed each year to identify possible strengths and weaknesses in student performance and gaps in the curriculum. The Dynamic Indicator Basic Early Learning Skills (DIBELS) measures are used to evaluate and determine the students in grades K-3 who need interventions and/or additional instruction in reading.

A plan is in place to review textbooks and instructional materials from each subject area once every seven years. The curriculum review committee made up of teachers from each grade level evaluates textbooks from several publishers. Discussions take place to determine how each textbook correlates with McCrel standards and the school mission and philosophy. A decision is made and the textbooks and instructional materials are adopted.

**Indicators:**

DIBELS Reports  
Metropolitan Achievement Test 8 (MAT 8) Reports  
Curriculum Handbook  
Seven-Year Curriculum Review Schedule  
Grade Level Meetings

**2.08 TECHNOLOGY:** The school will use technology, and have a written plan for providing growth in this area, to meet curricular goals in teaching and learning.

There is a written computer skills curriculum for the K-8 classes. Students learn skills such as keyboarding, word processing, computer operations, excel spreadsheets, powerpoint presentations, digital photography, and video presentations.

The school has a computer lab with 25 IMac computers. The school also has a large inventory of media tools including: LCD projector, DVD players, televisions,

video cameras, digital cameras, and a mobile wireless computer laptop lab with an airport for teachers to use in their classrooms. Each classroom is equipped with an overhead projector, one to two computers for student use, tape recorders, radios, and microscopes.

The school also uses technology to communicate with parents and staff. Each teacher has a desktop computer and an email account. Teachers also have a web page that parents can access for classroom information and online grading (grades 3-5). The school website is used to relay information about the school and upcoming events. The school utilizes the Honeywell Instant Alert for Schools to send messages/reminders to families via email, phone, and text messaging.

**Indicators:**

IMac Computer Lab  
Mobile Wireless Computer lab  
Computer Curriculum  
Classroom Inventory of Media  
School Website  
Honeywell Instant Alert for Schools

**2.09 SPECIAL NEEDS:** The school will have a written process for identifying, assessing and prescribing services for learners with special needs; in addition, the school will provide an educational program for advanced learners.

Nativity of Mary School utilizes the Bloomington Public School District 271's written process, the General Education Intervention Plan, for identifying learners with special needs. If a student is identified with special needs, Nativity of Mary School works in collaboration with the Bloomington Public Schools to devise an individual educational plan. Once a plan is put in place and the child is receiving services, the classroom teacher works with the Bloomington special education team throughout the year to assure the student's needs are being met.

To accommodate the needs of individual learners with a qualifying disability, 504 plans are written and implemented as needed. A team of teachers, parents, and administration meet to write the plan collaboratively. The plan is reviewed annually. Information about each student's needs is communicated by the teacher to the succeeding grade on a yearly basis.

Counseling services are also available to Nativity of Mary School students. Counseling services include individual and group sessions. The counselors work on career planning, high school registration, friendship groups, conflict resolution, and assisting with homework and organization.

Title I services are available to students who are identified with low achievement in the areas of reading, writing, and/or math. Placement is determined through

teacher observation and assessment. After identification, the Title I teacher provides instruction for the student once or twice a week as needed.

While Nativity of Mary School does not have a gifted and talented program, there are number of enrichment opportunities to challenge the advanced learners. Teachers differentiate the curriculum by providing additional enrichment activities: advanced math placement in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, leveled reading groups, reading incentive programs, Quiz Bowl, Geography Bee, science fair, invention convention, Junior Great Books (grades 2-5), and Accelerated Reader (grades 3-5). Extra-curricular opportunities include: math team, Robotics club, chess club, lego league, and drama club.

**Indicators:**

General Education Intervention Plan from Bloomington Public School District 271  
504 Plan  
Teacher Assessment  
Sampling of Various Enrichment Flyers

**2.10 EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT:** The school will have classroom environments that are conducive to learning.

Nativity of Mary's school philosophy calls the school community to nurture an atmosphere of respect. Each classroom teacher has developed a management plan that promotes a positive classroom environment. Student expectations are communicated to the students and parents. Nativity of Mary School's Christian values theme, "We are on the RIGHT track", reinforces each classroom's management program. The acronym, RIGHT, stands for Respect, Integrity, God, Honesty, and Trust.

**Indicators:**

Classroom Behavior Plans posted in rooms  
Parent/Student Handbook

**SUMMARY: Curriculum And Instruction**

Strengths and Challenges

**Strengths**

- Classroom teaching reflects mission statement and philosophy.
- Curriculum Handbook is updated and current.
- Professional development opportunities are provided.
- The strong academic program is evidenced by students accepted into honors classes in high school.
- A multi-sensory primary reading program that teaches the five strands of reading has been implemented (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension).

- An on-line grading program for grades 3-8 that can be accessed by parents and students for immediate parental tracking.
- Teachers differentiate instruction to meet students' needs.
- There is a strong expository writing program across the curriculum.

### **Challenges**

- There is not enough time for teachers to regularly meet to evaluate and discuss curriculum.
- Technology is not fully integrated across the curriculum.
- There is not an evaluation process for changing Progress Reports.
- A written process has not been developed for evaluating curriculum.

## **Standard 3: Learner Performance**

*The Identification, Prioritization and Monitoring of Student Achievement*

**3.01 ASSESSMENT PROCESS:** The school will provide a systematic and clearly understood process of learner assessment that includes at least one standardized testing instrument.

Nativity of Mary School relies on a variety of approaches to assess and evaluate learners. Approaches include performance assessment, group and independent projects, written assessments, rubrics, classroom participation, and evaluation through teacher observation. The purposes of such approaches are to provide the teacher with immediate feedback on students' progress, determine whether to teach more complex skills, or pause in the teaching process, and reinforce or review skills. Information is used in determining grades, in conferencing with parents and/or students, and in conferencing with a colleague. Standardized tests, such as the MAT 8 and OLSAT, are given in grades 3, 5, and 7. The Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Learning Skills, (DIBELS) measures are administered to students in grades K-3. The results are used by teachers to improve and adapt curriculum.

### **Indicators:**

MAT 8 Reports

OLSAT

Teacher Assessments: written, oral, kinesthetic, observation

Formal Assessments: tests, quizzes, individual/group projects

DIBELS Reports

**3.02 ASSESSMENT AND CURRICULUM:** The school will have an assessment process that evaluates whether the learners are meeting the expectations of the curriculum handbook.

The Curriculum Handbook helps guide the staff to assure that they are teaching the expected outcomes. A curriculum map for each grade and subject outlines monthly objectives, skills, assessments, and resources. In the spring of each year, classroom teachers meet with the next grade level to discuss what curriculum expectations were mastered, and the curriculum that needs to be reinforced for the upcoming school year.

Nativity of Mary regularly evaluates the results of the learner assessments. MAT 8 Standardized Test results are shared with the staff and are used during curriculum review. DIBELS is administered three times a year at which time teachers evaluate the progress of the students. Teachers modify, review and implement curriculum changes based on the results and on current curriculum standards.

**Indicators:**

MAT 8 Reports  
DIBELS Reports  
Curriculum Handbook  
Curriculum Maps

**3.03 ASSESSMENT DEMONSTRATES ACHIEVEMENT:** The school will have curriculum and instructional practices that result in positive student achievement over time.

Various assessment techniques used to monitor student achievement include the following: trimester progress reports, mid-trimester reports, and parent/teacher conferences in the fall and spring. Teachers also use tools such as self-evaluation, performance assessment, group and independent projects, written assessment, and evaluation through teacher observation.

Kindergarten employs a checklist of skills mastered. Grades 1-2, grades 3-5, and middle school each have their own progress report formats.

**Indicators:**

Mid-trimester Reports  
Progress Reports  
MAT 8 Reports  
Holistic Award for Middle School students based on Progress Reports  
Parent/Teacher Conferences

**3.04 ASSESSMENT RESULTS EFFECT CHANGE:** The school will regularly evaluate the results from the learner assessment process, and if necessary, make changes in curriculum and instruction.

The staff continually assesses learner progress. Grade level teachers work closely together in the development and improvement of the curriculum and instruction. Primary, intermediate, and upper levels meet on a scheduled basis to evaluate and discuss curriculum areas. All levels continuously meet to discuss students' needs and instructional interventions. At the end of the year, each grade level meets with the previous and next grade level to discuss continuous improvement strategies and curricular concerns.

**Indicators:**

Faculty Meetings  
Primary, Intermediate, and Upper Level Meetings  
Grade Level Meetings  
Curriculum Committee Meetings  
End of Year Reviews with Grade Levels

**3.05 STUDENT RECORDS:** The school will maintain student records containing

assessment documentation, in addition to other information required by law and as necessary for the operation of a quality educational program.

Each student has a cumulative file that contains all progress report cards, attendance records, profile charts, standardized tests, release of records requests, educational plans (504 & IEP), some student work, parent information and health records.

**Indicators:**

Cumulative File – see secretary to see a file

**3.06 ASSESSMENT RESULTS COMMUNICATED:** The school will communicate learner progress to parents and the school community while respecting principles of confidentiality and respect.

The school uses a variety of means to communicate progress to parents. The MAT 8 reports, mid-trimester reports, and trimester progress reports are sent home in a sealed envelope. On-line grading for grades 3-8 is available to parents. Each parent has a password to ensure confidentiality. IEP and 504 plans are reviewed with parents on a scheduled basis. Final IEP reports are mailed home from Bloomington Public School District 271. The 504 plans are personally given to parents or sent home in a sealed envelope.

Parent/teacher conferences are held in the fall and the spring. Teachers have on-going communication with parents throughout the year as necessary. Each teacher has a desktop computer and email account do to facilitate communications.

To ensure privacy and confidentiality, cumulative folders are stored in a secure location. Cumulative folders are accessed through a sign-in system.

**Indicators:**

Mid-trimester Reports  
Progress Reports  
MAT 8 Results  
On-line Grades  
Parent/Teacher Conferences  
Teacher email accounts

**3.07 ATTENDANCE / TARDINESS:** <sup>LR</sup> The school will have attendance and tardiness policies and procedures that are written, published, communicated and enforced; In addition, the school will in a timely manner complete annual enrollment reports as is required by the local public school district and the state, and maintain copies of such reports.

The attendance and tardiness policies are described in the Parent and Student Handbook. The classroom teacher takes attendance each morning and sends it

to the nurse's office. Tardy slips are given to students as they report to the office, and the slip is given to the classroom teacher with reason. Parents sign students in and out in the Student Sign-In/Out Book if students come or leave at times other than the normal school day. The nurse calls home to check on a student who is absent if the parent/guardian has not called the attendance line concerning the absence. The school nurse follows up with the teacher regarding the absence.

The enrollment report is completed for the Bloomington Public School District which maintains copies of the reports.

**Indicators:**

Attendance Record  
Enrollment Report  
Tardy Slips  
Student Sign-In/Out Book

**SUMMARY: Learner Performance**

Strengths and Challenges

**Strengths**

- Staff, administration, parents, and students share a strong commitment to successful learning.
- A variety of data and assessments is used to evaluate learner performance and determine curricular changes.
- Nativity graduates often test into honors courses in high school.
- Cumulative records are kept in a secure location.
- Online grades are readily accessible to parents/students (grades 3-8).
- Written student progress evaluations are communicated 6 times per year.
- There is on-going communication about students' skills/progress/learning across the grade levels.
- MAT 8 testing results are reviewed and evaluated yearly.
- DIBELS Reports are reviewed and used to individualize instruction.

**Challenges**

- Standardized test scores could be used more effectively to improve and enhance curriculum.
- Attendance is done by hand.
- DIBELS interventions could be used more effectively in the classroom curriculum.
- The staff has differing views on the philosophy of grading.
- The staff is not consistent with parent contact regarding absences and tardies.

## **Standard 4: School Climate and Facilities**

### *The Environment for Teaching and Learning*

**4.01 STUDENT BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS:** The school will communicate expectations for student behavior and will enforce a student discipline code that is supportive of the school's mission and philosophy, and conducive to learning.

As stated in Nativity of Mary School's mission and philosophy, students are encouraged to make Christ-centered choices based on Gospel values. The staff models the expected behavior. Teachers hold high standards for students' behavior, which promote self-discipline and respect for the rights and safety of others. Staff, parents, and students work together to implement Christian core values.

Nativity of Mary School has a discipline policy described in the Parent and Student Handbook. Annually, parents and students sign a form stating that they have read and understood the policies of the school. This handbook is updated annually. Teachers have classroom management systems in place and communicate them to parents and students throughout the school year.

The staff has attended various workshops to strengthen and reinforce classroom management systems.

#### **Indicators:**

Parent and Student Handbook  
Posted Classroom Management Systems

**4.02 CONFLICT RESOLUTION:** The school will communicate and use a process for resolving conflicts and grievances within the school community.

The process for handling conflicts with parents, students, teachers, and administration is described in the Parent and Student Handbook.

The process for resolving conflicts with staff is described in the Justice in Employment documents, which are in the Personnel Policy Handbook. Each staff member is provided with a Personnel Policy Handbook.

#### **Indicators:**

Parent and Student Handbook  
Personnel Policy Handbook

**4.03 SPACE CONSIDERATIONS:** The school and class enrollments are compatible with the capacity of the facility.

Nativity of Mary School has a current enrollment of 340 students. There are two classrooms per grade level. The classrooms for each of the K-5 grades are located near to each other. Most of the classrooms in middle school (6-8) are

located in a separate hallway. Nativity of Mary School has a library, music room, computer room, gym, nurse's office, school office, resource room, and rooms for extra-curricular activities.

Kindergarten has a limit of 20 students per classroom, grades 1-5 is limited to 25 students, and grades 6-8 is limited to 26 students. The current average is 19 students per class.

**Indicators:**

School Map

**4.04 RESOURCES/ FACILITIES:** The school 's resources, instructional materials, equipment, and facilities support the educational program.

Nativity of Mary School has 18 grade-level classrooms as well as a computer lab, gymnasium, music room, and resource room. The school also has a library, band room, piano room, Catholic youth room, and rooms for extra-curricular activities. The office area includes the nurse's office, principal's office, administrative assistant's wait area, conference room, project room, and copy/work room.

Nativity of Mary School uses instructional materials and resources that support the curriculum and the diverse needs of the learners. The school uses textbooks, FOSS Science kits, various manipulatives, educational videos, guest speakers, Art Masterpiece, artist in residence, Bravo music program, music equipment, workbooks, art supplies, Orton-Gillingham, Project Read, Sondag System, and a mobile wireless computer lab. Computers are available in every classroom as well as in the computer lab.

Classroom teachers have access to the following equipment for learning: computers, copy machines, internet access, overhead projectors, maps, globes, science equipment, fax machine, printers, laminators, LCD projectors, TV/DVD/VHS players, Destiny Resource Manager 8.5 library catalog, and a mobile wireless computer lab.

**Indicators:**

Classroom Inventory

Instructional Materials – on-site

School Map

**4.05 LIBRARY / MEDIA:** The school's library and media resources support the educational program.

The school's library supports the Nativity of Mary School curriculum and educational needs of the students by maintaining its book and magazine collection, which offers a good selection of fiction and non-fiction books. All classrooms visit the library once a week for 30 minutes.

The school's library has the Destiny Resource Manager 8.5 for cataloging books, which was updated in June of 2008. The library has two computers available for reference purposes. There are also videos and DVDs available for educational purposes. The Accelerated Reader program is facilitated through the school library and on classroom computers.

**Indicators:**

Destiny Resource Manager 8.5 (electronic catalog)

Library Books

Periodicals

Computers

Accelerated Reader Program List

Videos and DVD's

**4.06 PREVENTATIVE MAINTENANCE:** The school facilities are safe, sanitary, and routinely maintained to assure effective working order and compliance with all legal and code requirements.

The school is in compliance with state regulations and all city and state codes. Routine inspections are done by the fire department, health department, and McNeill Environmental.

A major school renovation took place in 2005, installing a new HVAC system, sprinkler, fire alarm, electrical and mechanical systems, new lighting, floors, and doors. New school and parish offices were built. The kindergarten rooms were remodeled.

Doors leading into the hallways of the school are locked during school hours. Doors and hallways are kept clear for safe passage according to fire code. Visitors must check-in at the school office and wear a visible visitor badge while in the school.

Nativity of Mary has a head maintenance engineer on site throughout the school day, to quickly handle any situations that may arise during the day. The school facilities are safe and maintained according to all codes.

**Indicators:**

Insurance Inspection Reports

Health Inspection Reports

Fire Inspection Reports

McNeill Reports

**4.07 HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUES:** <sup>LR</sup> The school has a written plan in place and is actively addressing any health and safety issues reported to the school, or that the school is aware of or reasonably should know or should have known about.

The school has a written plan in place and actively addresses all health and safety issues reported to the school. The director of maintenance works with McNeill Environmental, the health inspector, and the fire inspector to make sure state and federal regulations are being properly followed. These inspectors check the water quality, lead abatement, asbestos, pesticide use, and other health and safety issues that are regulated.

The school nurse is on-site 80% of the school day. The school nurse maintains all of the health records and makes sure that immunizations are up-to-date. She performs vision and hearing tests. She gives teachers a list of student health concerns and gives teachers instructions on health issues. Peanut butter sandwiches are individually wrapped to prevent contact with students who have peanut allergies. Health plans are in place for students with diabetes, asthma, dairy, wheat and other allergies. Elevators are available for those with disabilities. First aid kits are assembled for each classroom and given to teachers when they go on field trips. When a contagious illness has been reported in a classroom, health notices are sent home. Staff members are also given a yearly review of epi-pen use, and the nurse posts health tips in the News and Notes, weekly school to parent newsletter.

Fire drills, lock downs, tornado drills, and bus drills are practiced according to state standards. Staff members who are CPR and/or First Aid certified are listed in the Emergency Response Book (Red Book).

Nativity of Mary School publications, advertisements, and web pages are in compliance with a student photograph policy. Student pictures are only used if a parent has signed a school directory/photo/video release form.

**Indicators:**

Emergency Response Book (Red Book)  
Inspection Reports – see section 4.06  
Nurse Records  
Health Service Notification  
Directory/Photo/Recruitment Release Form

**4.08 CRISIS MANAGEMENT:** <sup>LR</sup> The school has written, published and communicated policies and procedures for addressing emergency situations and regularly conducts drills and reviews policies/procedures with school community.

An Emergency Response Procedures folder is posted at the door of each classroom. Nativity of Mary practices fire drills, lock downs, and tornado drills according to state standards. Each classroom has an emergency exit map posted. The school has had police personnel on site to facilitate with lock down drills.

**Indicators:**

Fire Drill, Lock Down, and Tornado Logs

Exit Maps  
Emergency Response Procedures Folder

**4.09 RIGHT TO KNOW, BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS:** <sup>LR</sup> The school annually provides professional training to its employees on “right to know” laws regarding the handling and storage of chemicals, blood borne pathogens, and other biohazards as required by OSHA.

The staff attends a yearly Bloodborne Pathogen and Right to Know training session conducted by a representative from McNeill Environmental.

**Indicators:**

Bloodborne Pathogens In-Service Documentation

**4.10 PRESCHOOL LICENSURE:** <sup>LR</sup> The school will attain licensure through the Minnesota Department of Human Services (Child Care Centers) if operating an accredited preschool program (pre-kindergarten, early childhood, etc.).

Nativity of Mary does not currently have a preschool.

**SUMMARY: School Climate And Facilities**

Strengths and Weaknesses

**Strengths:**

- Nativity of Mary School is warm and welcoming community.
- The staff strives to effectively communicate with families regarding student behavior.
- Handbooks are reviewed and revised on an ongoing basis.
- Librarian updates materials based on teacher recommendations and requests.
- Clear behavior expectations are provided to staff, students, and parents.
- Emergency Preparedness Plan is well written, and the staff has been well trained in its implementation.
- To ensure school security, only the main school door is unlocked during the school day. All visitors sign in at the main office and wear a visitor badge. All staff wear badges.
- The school is compliant with city and state health and safety regulations.

**Challenges:**

- Creating a secured building along with a warm welcoming environment.
- Teachers are unable to access the library card catalog via classroom computers.
- Nativity of Mary does not have a preschool.
- The playground equipment is outdated and the entire playground is not secured.
- Maintenance requests do not get done in a timely manner.
- A written cleaning checklist for the cleaning crew does not exist.



## **Standard 5: Community Relations**

*The Effort to Include All Who Have an Interest in the School*

**5.01 ORIENTATION:** The school will provide an appropriate orientation for all new staff, families, students and volunteers. The orientation will include: school mission and philosophy, roles and responsibilities, programs, policies and procedures, and expectations for learners.

The principal gives new employees an orientation and tour of the school. At that time, they are given a packet of information that includes a job description, school procedures, the staff handbook and the personnel handbook. They meet with the human resource representative to review benefits and tax forms. The staff person is assigned a mentor teacher to guide him/her throughout the year.

For families that are interested in the school, a personal tour is given by the school principal. This gives families an opportunity to ask questions in a small welcoming environment. Interested students are invited to visit a classroom to experience the school atmosphere. The parents are invited to attend other informational meetings with the principal such as the “Cake and Coffee” gathering, Open House, and Kindergarten Round-Up. These events give the principal an opportunity to share the mission and philosophy and present an overview of the school and its programs.

Students entering kindergarten and their parents are invited to a visit day in May. Students are given a tour of the school by a current kindergartner, and they meet the Kindergarten teachers. A week long “Kindergarten Camp” in July is available to incoming kindergartners. Participants experience a typical day, become familiar with the school, and meet their classmates.

New Family Orientation Night takes place in August. New parents and students get an overview of the school year, hand in all of their forms, get teamed up with a mentor family, and ask questions. They are invited back at registration time to meet teachers and visit with other families. On Back to School Nights, which are held during the first few weeks of school, parents visit their child’s(ren’s) classroom(s) and learn about the curriculum, expectations, procedures, and volunteer opportunities.

Kindergarten Move-Up and Fifth Grade Fly-Up Days introduce students to the first grade and upper level respectively. Students spend time in the classrooms, are informed of the procedures, and are able to ask questions of teachers.

A volunteer packet is given to each family describing volunteer opportunities. Volunteers at Nativity of Mary School help in several areas such as lunchroom, playground, room parents, Junior Great Books, Accelerated Reader, clerical work, and classroom parties. Volunteers are Virtus-trained and given a

background check prior to working with children. Typically, the chairperson of the volunteer program orientates new volunteers.

Information about school activities, student awards, and special events is included in the Nativity of Mary Parish weekly bulletin in order to include everyone who has an interest in the school.

**Indicators:**

School Calendar

Parent and Student Handbook

Kindergarten Round-Up Handbook

Virtus Training

Background Check

Code of Conduct

New Teacher Checklist

New Employee Information Packet

Volunteer Registration Information Packet

**5.02 REGULAR COMMUNICATION:** The school will maintain regular communication between the school and home.

Nativity of Mary School maintains regular communication between home and school through a variety of vehicles. The News and Notes, a weekly newsletter, is distributed to every family on Thursdays either as a hardcopy or via email. The newsletter provides information on upcoming school events, important dates, parish events, fundraising information, classroom curriculum updates, and volunteer opportunities. The newsletter is posted on school bulletin boards and on the website.

Nativity of Mary School utilizes technology to maintain communication between school and home. The school website provides information on upcoming events, sports and activities, and other related links for parents. Each classroom teacher has a webpage to post information such as assignments, tests, upcoming dates, classroom news, spelling lists, and photos. Handbooks, calendars, volunteer opportunities, as well as other forms of information are posted on the website. Honeywell Instant Alert for Schools enables school staff to send messages via email, voicemail, text, and/or page.

Nativity of Mary School teachers communicate with parents frequently about academic progress, study skills, and social/emotional development through email correspondence, notes, and/or phone calls. Teachers have email accounts and computers in their classrooms for easy, convenient communication. Each teacher has a separate, private voicemail box. Parents are encouraged to attend fall and spring conferences and can schedule meetings with teachers as necessary. Students have access to planners, homework websites, and online grades for students in grades 3-8.

**Indicators:**

Samples of:

Classroom Newsletters

Website

Conference Sign-Up Sheet

News & Notes

Communication Folder

Honeywell Instant Alert

Teacher Email/Voicemail

**5.03 PUBLICATIONS:** The school's written communication will help to develop informed relationships between learners, their families, the school, and the civic community.

As described in 5.02, Nativity of Mary School has many diverse methods of written communication to develop informed relationships between the school and its learners and families.

Nativity of Mary School also maintains communication with the Nativity of Mary Parish community on a regular basis through the church bulletin. The school also has informational brochures available in the school office, the church vestibule, and the church Gathering Space.

Since the school draws students from many Catholic parishes, school information is also provided to other churches for their weekly bulletins.

The school communicates to the community through articles in the "Minneapolis Star and Tribune", "Bloomington Sun Current", "Bloomington Magazine", "Catholic Spirit", and Pflaum Publications.

**Indicators:**

Nativity of Mary Church Bulletin

School Brochures

"Bloomington Sun Current"

"Catholic Spirit"

Pflaum Publications

"Bloomington Magazine"

"Minneapolis Star and Tribune"

**5.04 PARENT ORGANIZATIONS:** The school will develop and promote organizations of parents involved in positively promoting the school and its mission.

Nativity of Mary School has organizations available for parents to positively promote the school and its mission. Some organizations that parents can join

are Moms in Prayer, School Commission, volunteer groups, and the school marketing committee.

**Indicators:**

School Commission  
Marketing Materials

**5.05 COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT / PARTNERSHIPS:** The school will promote involvement in community activities and events and will develop community partnerships with local and school organizations that sponsor and support educational projects.

Community service is an integral part of Nativity of Mary's school philosophy. The school has been involved in a variety of service projects each year which are subject to change. Some of the most recent community service projects include: Pennies for Patients, VEAP, Cystic Fibrosis Walk, Feed My Starving Children, Elderly Friends, Ronald McDonald House, Books for Africa, Gifts of Love, H2O Project, Operation Christmas Child, Disaster Relief, nursing home and senior center visits. The school choir performs at the Mall of America, senior citizen centers, St. Paul's Monastery, and other Catholic churches.

Nativity of Mary School promotes involvement in community activities and events. Some examples are Dads' Pancake Breakfast, Italian dinner, Boy/Girl Scouts, silent auction, and parish festival.

**Indicators:**

Fliers for Community Events  
Service Project Examples

**5.06 MARKETING/DEVELOPMENT PLAN:** The school will have a marketing/development plan in order to increase public visibility, foster community relations, and maintain necessary revenue and enrollment.

Nativity of Mary School has a marketing committee consisting of parents and the school principal. The committee develops a plan for each year to increase visibility and enrollment. Marketing funds are used for direct mail, posters, brochures, lawn signs, banners, hospitality, newspaper ads, postage, printing, independent contractors, as well as information and admissions events. The committee has also created an incentive program for new families and family referrals.

**Indicators:**

Advertisement Samples  
Yard Signs  
Window Cling  
Website

School Brochures  
Parish Bulletin  
Referral Incentive Program

**5.07 ANNUAL REPORT:** The school will publish and distribute an annual report to parents and other stakeholders.

A parish annual report is written and published each year. The report provides school information on enrollment and finances. It is announced in the bulletin and is available in the parish and school offices. In addition, the school has highlighted its achieved goals through the News and Notes, a letter home, and/or the State of the School address.

**Indicators:**

Parish Annual Report  
Sample of News and Notes  
End of the Year Parent Letter

**SUMMARY: Community Relations**  
Strengths and Challenges

**Strengths:**

- Nativity of Mary School maintains strong, consistent communication between the school and the community.
- Students have strong community involvement through frequent service projects.
- Nativity of Mary School provides volunteer opportunities for the parents and the community to be involved in the school.
- Principal's information nights and tours of the school to prospective families are well-presented.
- The school is visible through school, parish, and community publications.

**Challenges:**

- Enrollment is not at capacity.
- There is not enough financial aid for families in need.
- Communication to alumni needs to be increased.
- The volunteer base is decreasing due to both parents in the home working.
- There is no written orientation for volunteers.
- Some students have difficulty with the transition from the self-contained classroom in 5<sup>th</sup> grade to the departmentalized system in sixth grade.

## **Standard 6: Personnel**

*The Qualifications, Evaluations, and Development of the Staff*

**6.01 ADMINISTRATOR QUALIFICATIONS:** The school will have principals/administrators who have Minnesota administrative licensure; or at a minimum, have a masters degree in education from an accredited institution, are enrolled in such a program leading to a qualified degree within a five-year period, or can demonstrate equivalency of such a degree.

Nativity of Mary's administrator, Barb Castagna, has a Masters Degree in Elementary Education from the University of Wisconsin – River Falls, and an Administrative Licensure through St. Mary's University. She currently holds Minnesota state license in the following areas: elementary 1-6, mildly mentally handicapped K-12, trainable mentally handicapped K-12, and an elementary administrative license.

### **Indicators:**

MN State License in Personnel Files

**6.02 ELEMENTARY TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS:** The elementary school's grade level teachers and those teaching math, science, social studies, or language arts will have Minnesota teacher licensure; or at a minimum have a baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution.

All of the teachers have a Minnesota State Teaching license except the music teacher and upper level science teacher. The music teacher holds a Masters Degree in music from the University of Notre Dame. The science teacher holds a baccalaureate degree from the University of Minnesota and is currently pursuing his Minnesota State Teaching license.

### **Indicators:**

MN State Licenses in Personnel File or Qualifying Degree

**6.03 ELEMENTARY SPECIALTY TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS:** The elementary school's specialists (world language, fine arts, technology, library, physical education, religions, etc.) will have a baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution; or at a minimum be able to demonstrate proficiency in their teaching area.

All specialists who teach Spanish, technology, library, physical education, music, and religion have a baccalaureate degree from accredited institutions.

### **Indicators:**

MN State Licenses in Personnel File or Qualifying Degree

**6.04 SECONDARY TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS:** The secondary school's teachers

and specialists will have Minnesota teacher licensure; or at a minimum have a baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution.

All of the middle school teachers have a Minnesota state teacher license except the science teacher who holds a baccalaureate degree and is pursuing a teaching license and the music teacher holds a Masters Degree in music from the University of Notre Dame.

**Indicators:**

MN State Licenses in Personnel File or Qualifying Degree

**6.05 CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS:** <sup>LR</sup> The school will conduct appropriate criminal history background checks on all individuals who are offered employment in the school.

All teachers, school staff, and parish staff at Nativity of Mary School have had a criminal background check. This is a school policy that is stated in our Parent and Student Handbook.

**Indicators:**

Criminal Background Checks on file in parish office  
Parent/Student Handbook

**6.06 STAFF CODE OF ETHICS:** The school will publish and maintain a professional code of ethics for all staff persons.

A professional code of ethics is printed in the faculty handbook.

**Indicators:**

Professional Code of Ethics in Faculty Handbook.

**6.07 EVALUATION PROCESS:** The school will have an evaluation process for all school personnel that includes job descriptions, annual written reviews, clear expectations, formative feedback on performance, a clear relationship between evaluation and employment decisions, and suggested courses of action to improve performance.

Nativity of Mary School has an evaluation process for all school personnel. Each year, each staff member is given a copy of their job description along with an agreement letter of confirmation. The job description, as well as the faculty handbook, clearly states the expectations of the employee. The staff members sign both forms, which are then placed in their personnel files.

The principal does all formal and informal observations of the school staff. The pastor evaluates the principal. Formal observations are done once a year, and informal observations are done periodically throughout the year. Evaluations for formal observations are written and provide validation and suggestions for growth. A written copy of the observation is put in the staff members' personnel

file. If there is ever a concern or suggestion that needs to be made to a staff member, the principal meets with the staff member directly to address the concern. If there is a need for a formal action to improve performance, justice in employment is followed.

**Indicators:**

Personnel Files  
Sample Evaluation Report  
Job Descriptions  
Staff Handbook

**6.08 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR STAFF:** The school will have all teaching staff and administrators annually participate in professional development opportunities that are related to significant planning objectives and job responsibilities.

Each year, in-service days are set aside for staff development. Staff development correlates with the needs of the students and the best practices in education. The school has brought in experts in various fields to train the staff on topics such as differentiated instruction, curriculum mapping, childhood mental health, ADD/ADHD awareness/symptoms, behavior management, and the Writers Workshop.

Teachers have visited other schools to learn about their programs and to talk about the strengths and weaknesses of these programs. The middle school teachers go to the Academy of Holy Angels on a rotating schedule to discuss benchmarks in various subject areas for incoming 9<sup>th</sup> graders.

The Project Read and Orton-Gillingham reading/spelling methods have been implemented at the primary level (K-3). The school has provided funds for the teachers to take the training in Orton Gillingham and/or Project Read.

Staff members are allotted \$150.00 each for other professional development workshops for professional growth of their interest. The workshops are approved by the principal.

**Indicators:**

Clock Hour Certificates of Attendance for Various Workshops

**6.09 BUDGETING FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:** The school will provide necessary resources in the budget for all staff to participate in annual professional development.

There is a budget set aside for professional development. This budget covers professional development days that the staff participates in as well as the \$150.00 per staff member for other staff development opportunities that he/she chooses.

**Indicators:**

Teacher In-Service Budget

**6.10 PERSONNEL RECORDS:** The school will have accurate, confidential, and complete personnel records as required by law and as necessary for its effective operations, including professional qualifications and credentials.

All personnel records are complete and confidential. They include MN State Teachers licenses, job descriptions, formal observations, work agreement letters, qualifications, qualifying degrees, and other pertinent information. The personnel records are kept in the parish business administrator's office.

**Indicators:**

Personnel Files in Parish Administrator's Office

**SUMMARY: Personnel**

Strengths and Challenges

**Strengths**

- Staff Development training correlates with best practices
- Staff is encouraged to take professional development.
- The implementation of the Orton Gillingham/Project Read training has helped all students, especially those at risk.
- Several staff members have been trained in the administration of Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS).
- DIBELS is used as a standardized measure to determine students' strengths and weaknesses in reading.
- The business administrator keeps accurate personnel records.

**Challenges**

- Finding time to revisit and discuss how training experiences are being implemented in the classroom.
- At times it is difficult for the principal to complete all formal observations and post conferences.
- Recognizing long-term service of staff members.

## **Standard 7: Leadership and Governance**

*The Responsibility for the Educational and Organizational Effectiveness*

**7.01 ADMINISTRATOR:** The school will have an onsite administrator who is responsible for the day-to-day administrative leadership and management of the school.

Nativity of Mary School has an on-site principal who is responsible for the day-to-day leadership and management of the school. When the principal is not present in the building, a “teacher-in-charge” is the administrative designee.

### **Indicators:**

Onsite Verification  
Teacher Interviews

**7.02 JOB DESCRIPTIONS:** The school will provide written position descriptions for all administrative staff, which include roles, responsibilities, and accountability.

Nativity of Mary School has written job descriptions for all administrative staff that describes the roles and responsibilities of the position.

### **Indicators:**

Job Descriptions

**7.03 GOVERNANCE:** The school will have a governing body to which the administrator is accountable.

The school principal is accountable to the pastor. In addition, Nativity of Mary School has an advisory board of eleven members, called the School Commission, which works with the school principal. Six of the members must belong to Nativity of Mary Parish, and three of the members may belong to other local parishes. The pastor is an ex-officio member of the School Commission and the school principal is an executive member.

### **Indicators:**

Organization Chart  
School Commission Constitution

**7.04 GOVERNANCE OPERATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT:** The school has established written roles and responsibilities for members of the governing body and provides opportunities for orientation, ongoing development and training.

The School Commission has a written constitution that describes the roles and responsibilities of the School Commission members. It also describes the roles and responsibilities of the officers of the School Commission. The orientation and training is informally given by the principal. In the past, a School Commission in-service training was available through the Archdiocese, but due to budget constraints the training has been discontinued.

**Indicators:**

School Commission Constitution

**7.05 BUDGET:** The school will have an annual budgetary process and budget that is consistent with the achievement of its goals; in addition, the school will produce an annual budget and financial report, and will make it available to stakeholders.

Nativity of Mary School has an annual budgetary process and budget. The school principal works with the business administrator and a finance volunteer to prepare the school budget. This process starts in January prior to the upcoming school year. The principal presents the school budget to the School Commission for feedback. After the School Commission reviews the budget, the budget is discussed and reviewed at a Parish Finance Council meeting and finally, it is presented to the Parish Pastoral Council.

**Indicators:**

Previous Year's Budget

Current Budget

Current Financial Reports

**7.06 TUITION AND FEE SCHEDULE:** The school will develop and communicate a tuition and fee schedule.

Nativity of Mary School develops a new tuition and fee schedule each year. Tuition can be paid in full, or on a ten month or eleven month schedule. Once the tuition and fees have been established, they are published in the News and Notes.

**Indicators:**

Tuition

Tuition Contract

**7.07 COMPENSATION STRUCTURE:** The school uses a communicated compensation structure for determining faculty salaries and benefits.

Nativity of Mary School reviews the compensation schedules of Burnsville, Eden Prairie, and Richfield Public Schools. The goal is to have a compensation schedule that is 85% parity of the average of those three surrounding districts. The parity was maintained for some years, but over the past three years, a flat percentage increase has been given to employees due to budget constraints. Salary scales are available to staff. If a staff person works 25 or more hours a week, 100% of the health benefits are covered. Staff who have children in the school get a 60% tuition reduction during the 2008-2009 school year. The tuition benefit will decrease by 5% each year and cap out at 50% tuition reduction.

**Indicators:**

Salary Schedule  
Employee Handbook

**7.08 EMPLOYEE HANDBOOKS:** The school has written, updated employee handbooks or published and communicated policies and procedures that affect school faculty and staff.

Each employee is given an Employee Personnel Parish Handbook and a School Faculty Handbook when he/she is hired. The School Faculty Handbook is updated annually. The handbooks include policies, procedures and expectations for staff. The staff is asked to sign and return a form stating that they have read and understood the handbooks.

**Indicators:**

Employee Personnel Parish Handbook  
School Faculty Handbook

**7.09 IMMUNIZATION RECORDS:** <sup>LR</sup> The school annually obtains and maintains records of state- required immunizations on its students; the school enforces state immunization requirements.

Every student must have a complete immunization record based on his or her age and grade that is in compliance with the MN School Immunization Law. The school nurse has a health record for each student which includes immunizations, vision and hearing screening, and other medical needs. The nurse reviews and maintains all health records and notifies parents/guardians when immunizations need to be updated. If a family wants to be exempt from immunizations, written documentation for the exemption must be notarized and turned into the nurse's office.

**Indicators:**

Health Chart  
Immunization Records (onsite)

**7.10 ADMISSIONS POLICY:** The school will implement admissions policies and procedures in accordance with legally, ethically, and professionally acceptable practices, including a statement of nondiscrimination.

It is the policy of Nativity of Mary to comply with state and federal laws prohibiting discrimination, "to the end that no person(s) shall be illegally denied or excluded from enrollment or participation in any educational program or activity operated by the school on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, gender, age, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, or disability."

Every local effort is made to provide each qualifying Catholic child the opportunity

to attend a Catholic school regardless of the financial situation of the family. Families are encouraged to seek the advice of the principal if financial problems arise.

According to the written school policy, students are accepted in the following priority:

1. All students presently attending the school.
2. New students who are brothers and sisters of students in the school.
3. New students who had brothers and sisters in the school.
4. New students who are members of the Nativity of Mary Parish.
5. Students who are not members of the school parish but are members of another Catholic parish.
6. Students who are children of alumni.
7. Students applying for transfer to the school who are non-Catholics.

Early entrants (children who are not 5 years of age by September 1) will be considered after all 5-year-old applicants have been accepted into a kindergarten classroom.

**Indicators:**

Admissions Policy in Parent and Student Handbook

**7.11 PARENT/STUDENT HANDBOOKS:** The school will provide parents and students an updated, comprehensive school handbook that includes policies and procedures.

Nativity of Mary School has a Parent and Student Handbook that is updated annually. The handbook includes all school policies and procedures of the school. It is posted on the website for families to download on their own. If families do not have internet access, they are provided with a hard copy of the handbook. Parents and students sign a form annually stating they have read and understood the handbook.

**Indicators:**

Parent and Student Handbook.

**SUMMARY: Leadership and Governance**  
Strengths and Challenges

**Strengths**

- Nativity of Mary School has clearly defined policies and procedures in place for employees, students, and families.
- The governing boards: School Commission, Parish Finance Council, Parish Council work together effectively.
- The pastor, principal and business administrator meet weekly to discuss goals for the parish and school.

## **Challenges**

- Reduced student enrollment is adversely affecting the school budget.
- There is no written orientation for new School Commission members.
- The staff is currently not at 85% parity of the three surrounding public school districts, Eden Prairie, Richfield, and Burnsville.

## **Standard 8: School Improvement**

*The Strategies and Tools for Improving the School*

**8.01 SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN:** The school has developed a written School Improvement Plan that identifies measurable, end-result objectives; strategies for achieving the objectives; and time-specific action steps for fulfilling the strategies.

Nativity of Mary has a written School Improvement Plan that addresses challenges that have been identified in the school self-study and in parent and student surveys. Together, the staff wrote a plan that identifies measurable objectives, strategies, and action steps that will create a better learning environment for the students of Nativity of Mary School.

### **Indicator**

School Improvement Plan

**8.02 QUALITY OF PLAN:** The school has developed a written School Improvement Plan in conformity with the Quality Expectations of MNSAA.

The Nativity of Mary School Improvement Plan aligns with the Minnesota Non-Public School Accrediting Association expectations.

### **Indicator**

School Improvement Plan

**8.03 COMMUNICATION OF PLAN:** The school uses a process for communicating the School Improvement Plan, in addition to regular updates on progress, to the various stakeholders of the school community.

The School Improvement Plan is available on the school website. Annual progress will be communicated through newsletters, parent letters, staff meetings and school commission meetings.

**8.04 EVALUATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF PLAN:** The school has a process for regularly evaluating and further developing its School Improvement Plan.

The School Improvement Plan will guide the educational process. The plan will be reviewed quarterly. The MNSAA Annual Report describes yearly progress. The plan will be updated as needed.

## **MCEA Standard: Catholic Identity**

*The Strategies and Tools for Improving the School*

**1.11 MISSION AND PHILOSOPHY STATEMENTS:** The school will have mission and philosophy statements that articulate the Catholicity of the school community's shared vision, principles, beliefs, and core values.

The mission and philosophy statements articulate the Catholicity of the school community. As stated:

### **Nativity of Mary School Mission Statement**

*WE BELIEVE:*

*that we provide our young people with a unique environment that integrates faith and life by engaging them in a variety of daily experiences that foster the development of Christ-centered choices based on gospel values.*

*that while emphasis on basic skills is essential to effective schooling, of equal importance is our responsibility to give children opportunities to think for themselves, to be curious, to think critically, to be actively involved in learning, and to nurture an appreciation of the value of knowledge and an awareness of God's goodness and glory in nature and the arts.*

*that a curriculum, the school's road map to excellence, must be sequential and goal-oriented if learning is to take place. Since education should be a meaningful and joyful experience, a curriculum must also offer a variety of enrichment that stimulates self-expression through writing, art, and class discussion.*

*that teachers are role models who are aware of those "teachable moments" when they can reinforce values of responsibility for self and others, personal dignity, and respect and human compassion.*

*that effective schooling grows out of a partnership between parents and school staff working cooperatively to establish and implement common goals and visions.*

*WE BELIEVE that the perennial and time-tested ideals of our Catholic school mission statement are essential to preparing our young people to play an active part in shaping a Christ-centered society of the **21st century**, a society that uses its knowledge to serve humankind and enhance freedom, a society where our children will continue our mission of proclaiming the Gospel of Christ.*

*that provide our young people with a unique environment that integrates faith and life by engaging them in a variety of daily experiences that foster the development of Christ-centered choices based on gospel values.*

### **Nativity of Mary School Philosophy Statement**

*Students, teachers, parents, support staff, and the principal are all gathered at Nativity of Mary School in a faith community whose goal is to educate and nourish the spirits, minds, and bodies of our young people. An essential part of this process is to foster and model reverence and respect for self, others, and the property of this faith community.*

*As a Catholic school, we strive not only to recognize the individual needs of each student but also to adapt instruction to meet those needs. Because each person is unique, the faculty is conscious of the necessity of providing an environment in which the individual students can be challenged but can also succeed. It is the role of the school to complement the home environment in preparing our young people for a Catholic way of life in our society of the present and future.*

*Therefore, as Catholic educators at Nativity of Mary School and with the support of the parents, we strive to help form strong Christian individuals who will open their minds, hearts, and souls to the religious, social, and academic values needed to bring them happiness and inner peace while enriching the community to which they belong.*

#### **Indicators:**

Mission Statement

Philosophy Statement

**1.12 GOVERNANCE AND POLICIES:** The school's governing body, policies, and documents and its management practices will reflect the Catholic mission and philosophy of the school.

Nativity of Mary School's mission and philosophy are reflected in the policies, documents, and management practices of the school. In addition, both the Parish Pastoral Council and the School Commissions' practices adhere to the school's mission and philosophy. For example, in an effort to make Catholic school education affordable for all students a procedure is in place to award financial assistance to families in need. Also, fees for athletics are waived in accordance the ability to pay.

Nativity of Mary school staff is expected to implement the school's mission and philosophy. The school discipline policy reinforces the mission and philosophy of the school and expects students to follow the teachings of Jesus. It is designed

with incentives and consequences to encourage students to choose respectful behavior.

**Indicators:**

NCEA Code of Ethics  
Parent and Student Handbook  
FAIR Grant application  
Faculty Handbook  
Athletic application

**1.13 LEADERSHIP, FACULTY AND STAFF:** The school's leadership team, faculty and staff will know, support and model the teachings of the Church as outlined in the *General Directory for Catechesis*, paragraphs 114 – 115 and the *National Directory for Catechesis*, sections 25. A – I and 54.9 a - d. School employees will pursue ongoing religious formation that will enhance the school's Catholic identity. Included in this section, all school employees will adhere to the school's "standards of conduct" that reflects Catholic tradition, Canon Law and current policies (including Article 12, *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*).

Nativity of Mary School's staff knows, supports, and models the teachings of the Church. Planning and celebrating the weekly school Mass offers an opportunity for staff to reflect on their faith and share with the community. The staff models and shares faith experiences through staff retreats and prayer before staff meetings. Classrooms display religious symbols, books, posters, and bulletin boards. Christian values are modeled through care and respect for each other. Staff members are involved in a variety of ministries at their own parishes including Eucharistic ministry, youth ministry, religious education, parish retreats, prayer groups, music ministry, Stephen ministry, and service projects. Staff members participate in an annual school retreat.

Each staff member receives a faculty handbook that includes the "Code of Ethics" from the NCEA, and each staff member is expected to follow the code. A summary of adherence to the teachings of the Catholic Church is included in each individual's job description. Background checks, Virtus training and Volunteer Code of Conduct forms have been completed for employees and volunteers.

**Indicators:**

NCEA Code of Conduct  
Staff Job Description  
Background Check Form  
Virtus Form  
Faculty Handbook

**1.14 FORMATIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE & FACILITIES:** Catholic schools will be welcoming, inclusive, and safe for all who enter the facilities, including families,

volunteers and guests. A variety of opportunities will be available for the entire school community to worship and pray together. Schools will develop age appropriate standards of conduct and training programs for children and young people according to the USCCB's Office of Child and Youth Protection.

Nativity of Mary is a welcoming, inclusive, and safe environment. All guests enter through the main entrance. Visitors are greeted by office personnel at the door, asked to sign in, and given a visitor badge. As an added safety precaution, staff is directed to acknowledge all visitors to ensure that all visitors are wearing a badge.

The entire school community including parents, parishioners, and guests are invited to worship together weekly at the school Mass, as well as participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation twice a year. Prayer services are planned and celebrated by various grade levels. During Advent and Lent, the school community gathers to celebrate the seasons. The Stations of the Cross are led by the students on Fridays during Lent.

During the course of the year, a document called the Formation of Christian Chastity, is sent home to parents. Teachers are provided with student lessons that are taught in the classrooms. Know the Rules from the Office of Child and Youth Protection is sent home annually. Lessons from Netzsmart are being taught in the classroom beginning with the 2008-2009 school year. Student standards of conduct are described in the school discipline policy. The policy adheres to the requirements from the Office of Child and Youth Protection.

**Indicators:**

Liturgy Planning Sheets

Stations of the Cross Sample

Prayer Service Sample

Know the Rules from the Office of Child and Youth Protection

Formation of Christian Chastity Document

Netzsmart Lesson Sample

**1.15 INFORMATIVE DEVELOPMENT OF FAITH:** The school will be a faith community that nurtures the spiritual lives of students, families, staff members and all others having contact with the school.

Nativity of Mary's faith community nurtures the spiritual lives of its students and is reflected in the mission and philosophy statements through the following: prayer, retreat and classroom experiences, Catholic social teachings, appreciation of cultures, respect for others' differences, and service to the community. The religion curriculum is supported by the religion textbook, Blest are We, and the Pflaum lectionary-based religion series. Catholic doctrine, rituals, scriptures, sacraments, and Catholic traditions are rooted in the life of the school. Retreat

experiences are offered to the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders, to help foster their spirituality and relationship with God and others.

Families are encouraged to participate in the faith-based education through the curriculum, service projects, liturgies, prayer services, and sacramental preparation. The community is involved through Moms in Prayer, prayer requests, classroom prayer, and liturgies nurture the lives of the community.

Prayer is an important part of each day acted out through daily prayer over the PA, prayer in the classrooms, weekly participation in the school Mass through liturgical ministries, and prayer services.

**Indicators:**

News and Notes

Reconciliation Prayer Sheet

Marathon Prayer Requests

Religion Curriculum

Family Pages from Religion Curriculum

Flyers for service projects and retreats

Lesson plan on Catholic Social Teaching

Liturgy schedule of weekly Masses

Mass planning sheet

**1.16 TRANSFORMATIVE FAITH COMMUNITY:** The school will actively promote faith to action service and social justice experiences as integral elements within the life of the school.

Nativity of Mary School actively promotes faith to action service and social justice experiences. Catholic social teachings drive the staff to lead the students in opportunities for service. Social justice projects connect students to others in the world who have needs and are created to clarify what the Scriptures say, "If one part of the body hurts, we all hurt." The call for solidarity has the most emphasis at Nativity since it states that "we are our brothers and sisters' keepers, one human family." There are several examples of social justice and service that the community is involved in each and every day.

Learning about Martin Luther King, Abraham Lincoln, Rosa Parks, and Dorothy Day, to name a few, helps in understanding the social teachings of the church: care for the poor, every person is sacred and social. Students' care for creation is displayed by planting trees and flowers on campus, collecting garbage for compost, recycling, and in celebrating Earth day each year. Catholic Social teaching is incorporated in the direction of service projects (KIDS Council) and discussion of the plight of the homeless, the global world, (H2O project) and the dignity of the individual. 8<sup>th</sup> graders participate in a Social Justice Fair where they present various topics of injustice. Students sponsor children in India and Mexico, showing the school's solidarity with people around the world.

Appreciation of diversity of cultures is exemplified throughout the curriculum. Music performances, social studies language arts classes and multi-cultural days foster an awareness and appreciation of other cultures. Teachers bring in outside speakers to share experiences of the Holocaust, Native America, India, Japanese Internment camps, and Africa.

The school fosters a climate of respect through character building bulletin boards and posters throughout the school, conflict resolution activities, classroom meetings, and one-on-one guidance. KIDS Council leads the students in lessons of Respect, Integrity, God, Honesty and Trust, to keep students on the RIGHT track, and continuing the school theme.

Some of the service projects that the students participate in include collecting socks for the Basilica of St Mary's outreach program, books for St Joseph's Home for Children, collecting food for and working at the VEAP (Volunteers Enlisted to Assist People) Christmas store, supplying a library for the children in Belize City, writing to soldiers in Iraq, Pennies for Patients, and giving up non-water drinks for the Kitui Kenya Water Project. Music students share their talents with Senior Citizens (SPARKS) at Summerhouse Senior Living, and the sisters of St Paul's Monastery.

**Indicators:**

Letters to Parents  
Receipts from VEAP  
Flyers  
News and Notes

**SUMMARY: Catholic Identity**  
Strengths and Challenges

**Strengths:**

- The pastor strongly supports the school and its mission and philosophy.
- A wide variety of social justice experiences, especially through service projects, deepens the students' awareness of the world and its needs.
- Weekly liturgies foster a deeper understanding of Mass.
- Students participate in liturgical celebrations in addition to Mass. ie: Reconciliation, Stations of the Cross.
- Kids Council models and reinforces the RIGHT Track (Respect, Integrity, God, Honesty, Trust) Program.
- Parents are supportive and show an active involvement in the school.
- Food and clothing collections demonstrate the school's commitment to service.

**Challenges:**

- There is a need for further clarification between pastor and staff concerning liturgical practices.
- Lack of a written schedule for determining service projects that require a donation.
- A growing number of families who are unchurched attend Nativity of Mary School.