

REPORT OF FINDINGS

ST. BRENDAN PARISH SCHOOL
940 LAGUNA HONDA BLVD.
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94127
ARCHDIOCESE OF SAN FRANCISCO



WCEA *Western Catholic
Educational Association*

AND

WESTERN ASSOCIATION
OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

IMPROVING STUDENT LEARNING

**A SELF STUDY PROCESS
FOR CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS**

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REPORT OF FINDINGS

for
St. Brendan Parish School
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PREFACE

We, the Visiting Committee, wish to commend you, the pastor, administration, faculty, staff, parents, and student body of St. Brendan Parish School for working together to make the school a loving, caring learning environment that is “mission-driven, program-effective, well-managed, and responsibly-governed.” We pray that the good work that you have done and the plans you have made for the future - to continue to educate the whole child, perpetuate traditions, and teach 21st Century skills - will help you become an even better school.

The team found our three days at St. Brendan Parish School professionally rich and personally rewarding. We experienced a community where everyone is striving to provide a Catholic environment where quality education is a priority. Most importantly, we found students who are filled with the “spirit of enthusiasm for learning,” who give witness to the school’s mission, and who live the reality of the SLEs daily.

We wish to thank all of you, pastor, principal, faculty, staff, parents, School Advisory Board, and students for your warm and gracious hospitality.

May the Christ we serve bless you with every success as you journey into your future.

Chapter 1: Introduction

A. How the Self Study was Conducted

What process has the school used to complete the Self Study (schedule of meetings, timeline, involvement of shareholders, etc.)?

The Visiting Committee carefully read the school’s description of how the self-study was conducted; during the visit, the committee questioned members of the school community about the nature of the process, how the various constituencies were involved, and whether there were challenges faced in creating the document.

The school reports that the process was thorough and comprehensive, taking place over 14 months between the fall of 2011 and December of 2012. It began with training of the leadership team in how best to conduct and write the self-study. It continued with surveys sent to parents, students, and faculty that enabled the school to identify and analyze strengths and weaknesses of its program and operations. Small groups comprised of faculty, staff, and parents, then wrote initial drafts of each section of the self-study, folding in ideas from parents and the School Advisory Board. Drafts were circulated to the whole community during the fall of 2012 for comment, and the school reports that “all shareholders were actively involved” with input for the final draft, which was completed in December 2012.

It is important to note that the school undertook a strategic planning process (the results of which will be described elsewhere in the Visiting Committee report) concurrently with the writing of the self-study.

What obstacles, if any, did the school experience in completing their Self Study?

The school reports the major challenge in the writing of the report was to represent all the ideas of a “large, highly committed shareholder base that was keen to invest in the process.” In addition, the school noted that while some of the discussion prompts “provided interesting articulation sessions, they did not always relate well to the writing tasks.”

B. Involvement and Collaboration of Shareholders in Completing the Self Study

Accreditation Factor #1: *The school involves all shareholders in data review, analysis and dialogue about perceived accomplishments in the area of student learning, and in developing, implementing and monitoring goals for improvements in student learning.*

How effectively has the school involved all shareholders in data review and analysis, dialog about student progress, school accomplishments and needs, etc.?

The Visiting Committee observed that the self-study process was inclusive and collaborative, involving all the constituencies of the school community in the creation of the document. The school has been highly effective in this area.

At the outset of the self-study (and the concomitant strategic planning process) surveys were sent to parents, alumni parents, parishioners, faculty, and staff asking questions in relation to Catholic identity, the mission of the school, enrollment, parent leadership, facilities, staffing, curriculum, finance, community relations, and development. The school reports that approximately 130 people responded.

The school continued by inviting 61 members of the community to participate in developing goals for the school, based on the results of these surveys, in the same areas listed above. The entire community was then asked to comment on those goals in an on-line survey. Finally, a School Advisory Board was created, charged with advising the principal and the pastor, as well as implementing the goals of the plan.

The school reports that the Mission Statement was revised as part of the planning process, incorporating “the goals of providing a quality Catholic education, the education of the whole child, maintaining traditions, and developing 21st century skills.” During this process, the school-wide learning expectations (SLEs) were reviewed and re-affirmed.

The school concentrated on assessing its Catholic identity during the process; efforts in this area included a parent survey (which did not elicit strong response), strategic planning surveys, the affective results of the ACRE test, conversations in strategic planning meetings, faculty meetings and the School Advisory Board meetings, conversations with the pastor, and conversations in various other school-sponsored events.

How effective are the school's plans to keep shareholders involved in ongoing systematic analysis of the school's effectiveness?

It is apparent, based on the self-study, that the school fosters and welcomes the involvement of all its shareholders in its ongoing evaluation of its effectiveness.

Chapter 2: Context of the School

A. School Profile

To what extent has the school compiled and analyzed annually updated data (cultural, demographic, financial, survey, interview) that identified major changes or trends since the last Self Study?

The Visiting Committee read a comprehensive history of the founding and development of St. Brendan School in its profile. The school was founded in 1947, staffed by Dominican Sisters from Adrian, Michigan. Of notable interest is that Sister Diane Erbacher was appointed the first full-time principal in 1965, a position she held for 40 years. Since 2005, the school has had a faculty consisting entirely of lay personnel, and the first lay principal was appointed in 2005.

The school currently enrolls 330 students, largely from the surrounding neighborhoods. Enrollment is stable, with waiting lists in most grades. In a very racially diverse city, it is worth noting that the school has a student body with limited diversity, with fewer Asian, Latino and African-American students than many other comparable schools. However, the student population is reflective of the parish community. The student body is overwhelmingly (97%) Roman Catholic. Most students attend Catholic high schools after graduation from St. Brendan.

The faculty averages over 18 years of tenure at the school. While all are lay personnel, the school feels it can maintain a strong Catholic identity because the “faculty and staff are committed to the Catholic faith.” All full-time teachers have credentials, or are working toward their credential, and seven hold master’s degrees.

The school reports that it regularly collects, reviews and analyzes multiple data sources to identify trends in enrollment, student achievement, and financial condition. Data sources include “standardized test results, classroom assessment, NCEA standard school survey information, Appendix A of the WCEA’s Improving Student Learning protocol, Archdiocesan year-end financial summaries, local demographic data from the Private School review website and the SFUSD website, and the 2010 census.” The Visiting Committee found that some of the analysis of this data was more thorough than others.

What do parent/student/staff surveys tell about satisfaction with the school?

Since the last accreditation, the school has used surveys of parents, students and faculty to gauge satisfaction with the school. Parent surveys show, according to the self-study, that the school’s

strengths include: that it provides “a Christian environment that supports a strong, Catholic, values-based education; a challenging comprehensive curriculum in a safe environment, and strong sense of community; and a program that promotes leadership.” Parent surveys show that suggested improvements include reducing class sizes, upgrading restrooms, and a creating a more formal articulation of the P.E. program.

Student surveys showed satisfaction with the school’s learning environment. The self-study notes that: “Students overwhelmingly reported that their teachers care for them and support their development.” In these surveys, students echoed the need for improved bathrooms, as well as changes to the Art and P.E. programs.

Faculty surveys in the fall of 2011 indicated that the faculty feel a strong collegial relationship, and agree that “the school’s faith dimension is clear, evident, and shared.” They expressed a need for more professional development to better enable them to work with students with learning differences.

B. Use of Prior Accreditation Findings to Support High Achievement of All Students

Accreditation Factor #2: *The school has used the prior accreditation findings, both those discovered by the school and those identified by the Visiting Committee, and other pertinent data to ensure high achievement of all students and to drive school improvement.*

How effectively has the school used the prior accreditation findings and other pertinent data to support faith formation and high achievement of all students?

The Visiting Committee observed, through its reading of the self-study and interviews with community members in the various constituencies, that the three goals recommended at the conclusion of the 2007 accreditation visit had been largely addressed and that the school had used the previous accreditation findings in an effort to effect school improvement. The school has been effective in this area.

Target Goal 1: St. Brendan Parish School community will work to achieve greater respect among students for each other and for school personnel.

The school reports that this has been addressed in a variety of ways, including incorporation of the *No Bully* program, as well as the development of a vision statement and an action plan that addresses how students should get along with each other. Teachers received training as well as a result of this program. Students have celebrated KIDS (kindness, inclusiveness, diversity and spirit) Week annually. The school has also implemented an ongoing social and emotional learning (SEL) curriculum, which includes a weekly morning meeting in each class. A school counselor was hired in 2011 to help teachers implement the Second Step program as part of the school’s SEL efforts. The self-study did point out that a number of parents believe the school could respond more forcefully to perceived episodes of bullying than it currently does, and this was borne out in the Visiting Committee’s meeting with parents, in which a small, vocal number

(four) expressed this sentiment pointedly. Surveys of students have indicated a drop in the perception of bullying since these efforts began.

Target Goal 2: St. Brendan School teachers will integrate problem-solving activities which involve reasoning, critical thinking, and communication skills into the math program.

Teachers have incorporated more problem-solving activities and questions into their math lessons regularly. The results from the problem-solving component of the Math section of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills have shown that the school is making good progress in this area, turning it from an area of weakness to an area of strength. Students are still, however, struggling with multi-step problem solving, and the faculty continues to work in this area. The Visiting Committee would like to have seen more evidence of the school teaching for critical thinking.

Target Goal 3: The school administration will create a written long-range plan in the areas of facilities, curriculum, staffing, financing, enrollment and professional development.

This was addressed between 2007 and 2010, using the findings of the Catholic Educational Consulting Services Study. In 2010, in an effort to be more strategic, the school contracted with Catholic Educations Services LLC and Dr. Jim Brennan to develop a strategic plan. Beginning in February 2011, a group of 14 people from various constituencies reviewed and revised the school's Mission Statement and developed five-year goals. These were presented to the entire school community for comment and ratification; following this a committee was created to write objectives based on these goals. This document has enabled the school to progress and demonstrate "measurable growth in student achievement."

How effectively has the school implemented the concept of continuous school improvement, e.g., data analysis and action, focus on high achievement, etc. in non-accreditation years?

An annual progress report on the Action Plan is sent to the WCEA commissioner and reported to parents at Back-to-School Night. The principal also reports on Action Plan progress in some other weekly newsletters and at parent meetings. The annual report of progress is updated on the school's website.

The Visiting Committee, based on the self-study and its conversations with constituents, feels that the school has used the accreditation process well, has addressed the major recommendations from the previous accreditation seriously, and has continued to focus on school improvement during non-accreditation years. The Visiting Committee ranks the school effective in this area.

Chapter 3: Quality of the School Program

A. Assessment of the School's Catholic Identity:

Accreditation Factor #3: The school is Catholic, approved by the Local Ordinary (Canon 803), providing opportunities for community worship and participation in the Sacraments, and promoting evangelization and service to the community.

How effectively has the school improved the spiritual formation of students, staff, and parents?

St. Brendan Parish School has improved the spiritual formation of its students, staff, and parents in a highly effective manner. The school has done an excellent job teaching its students in the Catholic faith and making the faith come to life for its community. Since 2007, the school has adopted a new religion series and sacramental preparation program. Further, the teachers use outside resources to supplement their teaching including television programs, books, websites, videos, and CTN. In assessing their students' understanding, the school instituted the ACRE test in 2008. The students consistently score above average, indicating their strong understanding of the Catholic teachings.

How effectively has the school implemented changes to improve their Catholic Identity and fully integrate it into the life of the school?

It is evident that the school effectively continues its legacy of having a strong Catholic Identity. St. Brendan Parish School has improved its sense of Catholic Identity and fully integrated it into the life of the school. The students participate in daily Religion classes that include discussion, written assignments, prayer, and scripture. The school provides many opportunities for school-wide prayer, including praying the rosary in October, Advent prayer services, and daily prayer through the school's in-house TV station. Since the last accreditation, the school has revised the mission statement to include the concepts of educating the whole child and passing along traditions. This reveals the school's goal to have a strong and active Catholic Identity in all that it teaches. The school has focused on the promotions of the SLEs through the principal's newsletters, which give a "powerful pause" for spiritual enrichment. Bulletin boards with themes of virtues and respect are visible throughout the school, while each classroom has a prayer center, crucifix, and statue of Mary, physically showing the school's Catholic Identity.

How effectively has the school analyzed changes they've made in Catholic Identity to determine how these changes have strengthened their Catholic Identity?

St. Brendan School has somewhat effectively analyzed changes they've made to improve their Catholic Identity. While the school has discussed many ways in which they've implemented new programs and activities that strengthen their Catholic Identity, the report does not use much data to show *how* these changes have strengthened the school. The school has evidence from the 2008 ACRE assessment in which the students score above average. More evidence from surveys or assessments would be helpful to demonstrate how the changes have improved their Catholic Identity.

B. Defining the School's Purpose

Accreditation Factor #4: *The school's purpose is defined through the school's mission statement, philosophy, measurable Schoolwide Learning Expectations, Arch/diocesan curriculum standards (local curriculum standards where Arch/diocesan standards don't exist), and other governing authority expectations.*

How effectively does the school's mission and philosophy reflect the Catholic nature of the school?

It is evident from St. Brendan Parish School's Self-Study document that the school has a clearly stated mission statement and philosophy that reflect the Catholic identity of the school in a highly effective manner. The mission statement states, "St. Brendan Parish School is committed to providing the highest quality Catholic education for each student. Combining deep-rooted traditions and current best practices, we are dedicated to educating the whole child so that he or she may be successful in the 21st century. We focus on teaching the students to be active Christians, responsible individuals, life-long learners, effective communicators and problem solvers." Learning to be active Christians was evident to the Visiting Committee during the visit as observed in the actions and words of the students, parents and teachers, the importance of prayer and liturgy in the life of the school and the signs and symbols displayed throughout the school.

The mission statement, philosophy, and Schoolwide Learning Expectations were co-developed and shared with all the major shareholders: parishioners, alumni, the faculty and the current parent community. They are reviewed annually by the shareholders.

How effectively has the school integrated their mission, SLEs, and standards into the total reality of the school?

The Schoolwide Learning Expectations flow from the school's mission and philosophy and indicate the community's commitment to both. The mission and expectations are comprehensive and are an integral part of each classroom experience. They are a lived reality and are effectively integrated into the life of the school. There is an understanding and buy-in of the Schoolwide Learning Expectations by the instructional staff and the students. Parents and other shareholders have a general awareness of the expectations. A wide range of approaches and support systems are available for students to achieve the Schoolwide Learning Expectations. Teachers regularly discuss the meaning and relevance of the SLEs with the students. They have been posted in classrooms and in hallways and re-written in age-appropriate formats. A formal report card to measure achievement of the SLEs was instituted in 2009-10. In developing the rubric, the faculty tried to keep it simple and make it look like the academic report card. Based on feedback from various groups it appears that the format needs to be reviewed and revised. The school community plans to undertake this task during the 2013-14 school year. Overall, the school has implemented the mission, SLEs, and standards in highly effective ways.

How effectively has the school communicated their mission and purpose, including any governing authority expectations, to their shareholders?

The administration of St. Brendan Parish School is highly effective in ensuring that the mission, philosophy and purpose of the school are communicated to all shareholders. The mission statement, philosophy and Schoolwide Learning Expectations are displayed throughout the school, written on school literature sent to parents, and posted on the school website. They are published in "Voyages," the school newsletter, the Parent Handbook, the school's application

materials, and the Mothers' Club Handbook. The principal uses them as the foundation for her monthly "Coffee with Mrs. G" info chats.

C. Organization for Student Learning to Support High Achievement of All Students

Accreditation Factor #5: *The organizational structures of the school focus on high achievement of all students, and communicate student progress to all shareholders.*

How effectively have the organizational structures of the school supported the school's mission and created an environment that is focused on high achievement of all students?

By observation, review of evidence, reading the self study, and interviewing shareholders, the visiting committee has determined that the organizational structures of St. Brendan School are highly effective in supporting the school's mission and an environment that is focused on high achievement of all students. The pastor and principal form a team of spiritual, organizational, and academic leadership. Together they have structured an environment that supports student spiritual growth with many opportunities for students to pray, worship, and grow as future leaders of our Church. They have provided support staff, teacher specialists, and a learning support program and teacher to ensure that each child can achieve his or her highest potential. They have provided a school counselor and programs that foster emotional health. They collaborate with the School Advisory Board whose members bring expertise and vision to their committee work with finance, public relations, development, facilities, and strategic planning. They work with the Mothers' Club and the Men's Club who provide fundraising for the school (sufficient to fund the difference between tuition and cost per child) and the athletic programs. They have provided a structure of technology throughout the school making it possible for the teachers and students to fully integrate technology into the curriculum.

Further, the principal has set an infrastructure that is clearly focused on providing support for the staff. She provides data, trends, supervision, direction, and inspiration. She and the staff identify staff development needs and she makes opportunities for workshops and inservices available to the staff. As a result, the staff has implemented practices such as cross-curricular instruction, integration of technology, cross-grade activities, and exploration of the Common Core Standards in math. A goal is to involve the classroom assistants in staff development as well. The principal also fosters total integration of the SLEs into the students' daily lives. She has created a culture of focusing on the whole child and encouraging the leadership skills of each child.

How effectively have the organizational structures of the school communicated student progress to the shareholders?

There is an effective network of communication at St. Brendan School that communicates student progress to all shareholders. The principal shares all pertinent information in her weekly *Voyages* newsletter, in her reports at Mothers' Club, Men's Club, the School Advisory Board, and in the church bulletin. The school website is also an important communication vehicle with continually updated information regarding homework, classroom information and teacher email contacts. A goal is to restructure the website to be more accessible especially to foster greater

collaboration between home and school. Also, the school provides *Fast Direct*, an online gradebook for parents of children in Grades 4-8 to access their children's grades and academic performance. In Kindergarten through Grade 4, parents are regularly sent packets of student work. Further, the Mothers' Club provides access to information and announcements on *Big Tent*, a social network for parents. Overall, a spirit of collaboration and open communication with all shareholders on behalf of all of the students is a hallmark of St. Brendan School.

D. Data Analysis and Action to Support High Achievement of All Students

Accreditation Factor #6: *The school uses educationally sound assessment processes to collect data. The school disaggregates and analyzes student performance data and uses the analysis as a basis for instructional/curricular improvement.*

How effectively has the school used educationally sound assessment processes to collect, disaggregate and analyze student performance data? (Note: include information about the use of standardized tests, teacher-made tests, and text-created tests; as well as the school's use of clear interpretations of the data analysis.)

St. Brendan Parish School is effective in using educationally sound assessment processes to collect, disaggregate and analyze student performance data. The school's administration and faculty successfully used the Interactive Results Manager (iRM) tool to disaggregate ITBS data and to examine longitudinal trends; evidence shows that students who remain at St. Brendan gain "one-and-a-half to almost two years of growth" every year. Instructional goals are formulated for all students, and a plan of educational support is created for students scoring below the 50th percentile.

St. Brendan Parish School uses a variety of formative and summative assessments. Assessment tools include textbook and project-based assessments, *McCall-Crabbs Standard Test Lesson in Reading*, science fair projects, classroom participation, teacher and principal observations, student self-assessments, student-teacher conferences, and homework. Assessments are used to differentiate math groups for grades six to eight and to assign ad hoc instructional groups in language arts. Teachers use assessment data to determine students' learning and understanding of concepts; adjustments are made when deemed necessary. Every year, graduates of the school are provided with a survey to solicit their feedback on curriculum and instruction.

How effectively has the school assessed SLEs and academic standards?

St. Brendan Parish School effectively assesses academic standards through regular collection, review, and analysis of multiple data sources; however, there is no discussion of SLE assessment in this section (see Section 3E). Adjustments are made to the curriculum and/or instructional strategies to ensure that all students achieve desired standards.

How effectively has the school used data analysis, trends, etc. as a basis for improving student learning such as: modifying instruction, challenging students to achieve, implementing new curricular materials, etc.?

St. Brendan Parish School is effective in using data analysis and trends as a basis for improving student learning. The students' scores on the Assessment of Catechesis/Religious Education (ACRE) test gives evidence to a highly effective curricular and instructional program in religion; areas in which students scored less than 85% are targeted for improvement. In 2010, the school adopted Sadlier's *We Believe* religion series to address those areas needing improvement.

In response to decreasing test scores in comprehension, St. Brendan Parish School adopted the Prentice Hall Copper Edition series in literature in 2009. Grades four through eight have recently started using the *McCall-Crabbs Standard Test Lesson in Reading* series, which has resulted in increased ITBS comprehension scores. Because of several seventh grade students requiring additional support in reading, the learning support teacher has assisted the seventh grade class with its reading curriculum during the past two years. Driven by ITBS data from 2006-2011, the school developed a coherent geography program. Since 2008, the school has been using the *Step Up to Writing* program. In response to observations about fourth and fifth grade students having difficulty with writing across the curriculum, the fourth and fifth grade teachers attended more comprehensive professional development workshops for the *Step Up to Writing* program.

Opportunities for improvement and success are provided for students earning lower than a C- in any subject. Strategies include small group or individual instruction, pullout sessions with the learning support teacher and/or reading support teacher, peer groups, and before- or after-school tutoring. ITBS scores and report card grades for math are used to determine which students in grades five through eight qualify for an invitational after-school math class. The school recently adopted a heterogeneous grouping of middle school students for math instruction.

Teachers have attended professional development workshops in the areas of technology, differentiated instruction, social and emotional learning, special needs and learning differences, and higher-order critical thinking skills.

E. SLEs and Standards-Based Curriculum to Support High Achievement of All Students

Accreditation Factor #7: *The school provides a challenging, comprehensive and relevant curriculum for each student that results in achievement of the Schoolwide Learning Expectations, Arch/diocesan curriculum standards (local curriculum standards where Arch/diocesan standards don't exist), and other governing authority expectations. All students make acceptable progress toward clearly defined and measurable Schoolwide Learning Expectations, Arch/diocesan curriculum standards (local curriculum standards where Arch/diocesan standards don't exist), and other governing authority expectations.*

How effectively has the school developed a curriculum based on SLEs and curriculum standards?

St. Brendan Parish School has highly effectively developed a curriculum based on SLE's and curriculum standards. The program is aligned with the State of California standards and the Archdiocese of San Francisco curriculum guidelines. Throughout the school year, the faculty uses the standards and the SLEs to implement curriculum maps, lesson plans, and assessments.

The staff is beginning to implement the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for Mathematics over the 2012-2014 school years. Faculty members dialogue across the grade levels and subjects to ensure that the curriculum and SLEs are being addressed. Since 2007, St. Brendan Parish School has purchased updated textbook series in religion (K-8), math (K-6 and 6-8), social studies (1-8), science (6-8), and literature (6-8).

How effectively has the school measured student achievement of the SLEs?

St. Brendan School has effectively measured student achievement of the SLEs. The school developed two versions, upper and lower-grades, that were adopted by the school in 2005 and reviewed in early 2011. Posters of the SLEs are displayed throughout the school, and components of the SLEs are cited on SBTV broadcasts, in the weekly faculty memos, parent newsletters, and classroom interactions. In 2009, the administration and faculty developed a report card for the SLEs and families are given the report in addition to the academic report card at the end of each semester. Teachers assess students' mastery of the SLEs through observation of their behavior and participation in various learning activities. The administration and faculty have discussed additional means to monitor and measure the students' progress toward the SLEs, possibly including rubrics and student self-assessment.

How effectively has the school measured student achievement of the curriculum standards, e.g., the use of multiple assessments to measure student progress, etc.?

St. Brendan School has highly effectively measured student achievement of the curriculum standards. The faculty uses multiple assessments to reinforce standards-based instruction, including the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), National Catholic Educational Association Assessment of Catechesis/Religious Education (NCEA ACRE) test, formal and informal curricular assessments, textbook assessments, teacher-generated assessments, and teacher observation. Class work, homework, projects, presentations, discussions, and peer interactions enable teachers to monitor student learning and understanding. Students in grades 3 through 8 also have opportunities for self-assessment when their teachers hold individual conferences in which each student can discuss his/her own learning.

How effectively has the school ensured that each student is making acceptable progress toward the achievement of SLEs and curriculum standards?

St. Brendan School has highly effectively ensured that each student is making acceptable progress toward the achievement of the SLEs and curriculum standards. The administration and faculty observe and examine student performance through student grades/scores on assignments and assessments; performance rubrics; direct feedback from students themselves; teacher observation of student interactions; articulation among the administration, faculty, and staff; and conferences with the parents. Students receive instruction through multiple learning modalities and experiences to assist them in making acceptable progress toward the achievement of the SLEs and curriculum standards, including: working in pairs, small groups, whole class, field trips, school assemblies, and guest speakers.

To increase acceptable progress by all students, St. Brendan Parish School has greatly expanded the use of technology, including SMART Boards, laptop and desktop computers, document cameras, interactive learning websites, on-line lecture notes and assignment lists, and PowerPoint presentations. Teachers incorporate cross-curricular projects that use different technological components. The school's on-line system for grades allows parents and students to access scores and missing assignments.

St. Brendan Parish School identifies students who are not making acceptable progress by several means: formative and summative assessments, ITBS scores, teacher observations, articulation by teachers across grade-levels and subjects, and conferences with parents. If necessary a student may be referred to an outside professional for assessment of learning differences and/or impairments.

Since 2010, the learning support teacher has provided each homeroom teacher with a binder of information about the specific learning differences and recommendations for any student in his or her class who has a formal diagnosis or is considered at risk. Each teacher uses this information differently to design suitable lesson adjustments and to implement the recommended interventions. Classroom aides, the reading specialist, and the learning support teacher assist the classroom teacher with small-group instruction, pull-out sessions, individual help, and before- and after-school tutoring for students identified with a specific learning difference. St. Brendan's is focused on clarifying the vision of the learning support program to best support the needs of children at risk and with specific learning differences. The faculty recognizes that the records of interventions employed with each child need to be better documented so that the information can be passed from one grade to the next. The Visiting Committee fully supports the school's plan to strengthen the Learning Support Program.

F. Instructional Methodology to Support High Achievement of All Students

Accreditation Factor #8: *The staff applies research-based knowledge about teaching and learning in the instructional process. Assessment is frequent and varied, integrated into the teaching/learning process, and informs curriculum planning.*

How effectively has the school integrated Catholic values throughout the curriculum?

St. Brendan School has fully integrated Catholic values throughout the curriculum in the many methodologies of the staff. Catholic social teachings are integrated into science, social studies, and other areas. Students share Catholic values in religion classes, liturgies, prayers, the morning SBTV program, traditional celebrations, daily Mass during Lent, choir, altar serving, and many other experiences. Students are actively encouraged to take leadership roles by preparing and conducting these activities. An example of this would be the 8th graders' leadership in designing the activities that foster acceptance of each other within the Peace Families program. In extra-curricular activities, the focus seems to be on recognition and sharing of one's talents and appreciation of the talents of others, teamwork, and good sportsmanship. On their survey, ninety percent of the parents "indicated that they believe the school is 'providing an atmosphere in which Catholic values and attitudes are emphasized and practiced.'" The Visiting

Committee agrees that the staff is highly effective in integrating Catholic values at St. Brendan School.

How effectively has the school used research-based instructional techniques to improve student learning?

The teachers of St. Brendan Parish School have attended professional development sessions that have helped them focus on using research-based instructional techniques effectively. With the shared goal of meeting the needs of all students, teachers employ such techniques as direct instruction, small-group instruction, peer and partner groups, break-out sessions with the learning or reading specialists and instructional assistants. Thus they maximize the talents needed to assist children in optimum learning. The learning support teacher helps make methodology recommendations for students needing more help. Teachers also integrate technology and focus on developing the 21st Century skills of collaboration, communication, problem solving, and critical thinking. Data from student surveys indicate that the students appreciate the opportunities to work in pairs or teams to solve problems or complete projects. The teachers have indicated that they need to work on “more explicit teaching and modeling of written responses that require higher order thinking” and the Visiting Committee’s observations bear this out clearly. To further engage all learners, teachers have designed cross-curricular and cross-grade activities and they plan to use this approach more often.

How effectively has the school integrated technology into the teaching/learning process?

St. Brendan Parish School has integrated technology into the teaching/learning process in highly effective ways. The goal is to engage students’ different learning styles, to support struggling learners, and to challenge the high-achieving ones. Students have an opportunity to use PowerPoint, videos, Excel graphs, Word documents, KidPix, SMART Boards, web quests and other online resources and a variety of search engines. Students have thirty minutes of computer class each week. There is a well-appointed computer lab staffed by a full time, qualified teacher, a full class set of laptops for upper grades, smaller sets for the lower grades, digital cameras, video cameras, as well as the SMART Boards and document cameras so that students may create projects that can be shared grade to grade. This array of hardware, software, and learning activities ensures that technology is integrated seamlessly into the teaching and learning process at St. Brendan School.

How effectively has the school used assessment to modify instruction/curriculum to help all students achieve the SLEs and curriculum standards?

St. Brendan Parish School teachers demonstrate effective use of assessment to inform instruction and to help all students achieve. The references to data in Section 3F of the self study indicate that the staff is accustomed to using data to make curricular decisions and to modify instruction where needed. An example of this is the reference to data showing students’ need for learning how to respond in writing to questions that require higher order thinking, especially in science and social studies. Strengthening these multi-faceted thinking and writing skills has become an Action Plan Goal for St. Brendan School; the Visiting Committee’s observations would lead it to concur. Overall, assessment choices are many and varied and range from ITBS scores to teacher

generated tests to class work, homework, projects, essays and other written responses, and teacher observation. Cross-curricular and cross-grade articulation allows teachers to work together to evaluate their teaching and modify methodology where needed. In all, the use of assessment at St. Brendan School is frequent and direct. This results in a program of teachers continually striving to meet student learning needs and has also resulted in the specific Action Plan Goal to revise the Learning Support Program and to strengthen critical thinking/writing. The Visiting Committee observed that all teachers and support staff are focused on helping all students achieve the SLEs and curriculum standards.

G. Support for Student Spiritual, Personal, and Academic Growth

Accreditation Factor #9: *Within the school's community of faith, students have opportunities to participate in support services and activities to assist them in accessing the curricular and co-curricular programs to achieve the Schoolwide Learning Expectations, Arch/diocesan curriculum standards (local curriculum standards where Arch/diocesan standards don't exist), and other governing authority expectations.*

How effectively has the school provided services, resources, and activities to help all students achieve at high levels?

St. Brendan Parish School is highly effective at providing services, resources, and activities to help all students achieve at high levels. The spiritual growth of the students is nurtured through a variety of activities such as daily religion lessons and prayers, regular attendance at school Masses and prayer services, seasonal traditions, and sacramentals displayed throughout the school. After their Confirmation, eighth graders serve as extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist. Sixth, seventh, and eighth graders are trained as altar servers for school and parish liturgies, and they have the opportunity to participate in monthly parish Youth Ministry activities. Youth Ministry team leaders conduct prayer, meditation, and other activities on a monthly basis.

St. Brendan Parish School employs a learning support specialist and a reading specialist who work with students having documented or suspected learning differences. The reading specialist works with individuals or small groups of students in the primary grades, either scheduled or as needed. The learning support specialist works with students in grades 3 through 8, individually or in groups, addressing needs in all subject areas. The specialists and the administration maintain a referral list of additional resources for parents seeking outside support. The school has identified the need to review and revise the structure of the Learning Support Program; the Visiting Committee affirms this goal and supports the school making a top priority in its Action Plan.

To address the psychological and emotional well-being of the students, St. Brendan Parish School has participated in the *No Bully* program, implemented the social-emotional learning curriculum *Second Step*, and developed a formal counseling program. The school counselor provides support to students and parents in dealing with psychological and mental health issues that affect students' performance. The counselor meets with students and parents individually, and she meets with groups of students to explore issues affecting the school community, identify solutions, and foster Christian behaviors and attitudes.

The on-site extended care program at St. Brendan Parish School is available for an additional fee. It provides a variety of enriching activities that support the SLEs.

How effectively has the school used parents and community resources, including Federal Program funding, to assist students?

St. Brendan Parish School is highly effective at using parents and community resources, including Federal Program funding, to assist students. The parents have been identified as the primary educators for their children, and parental support is clearly evident in the school's curricular and co-curricular programs. Parents have several opportunities to become involved with the school to support the curriculum both on and off campus. Parents help with sacramental preparation, ensure their children perform mission and community service projects, and provide support as motor skills assistants, team coaches, and field trip drivers. Parent professionals provide instruction that enriches the curriculum, such as first aid and CPR training, drug awareness education, and cultural education. Parents are also highly involved in the Mothers' Club, the Men's Club, and the School Advisory Board. Federal funding has been used to support all students through professional development for the teachers and administration; however, since 2010-2011, no funds have been available from the Title II, Part D program (enhancing education through technology).

H. Resource Management and Development to Support High Achievement of All Students

Accreditation Factor #10: *The pastor, principal, and school board develop, implement, and monitor resources and plans to ensure and support high achievement of all students of the Schoolwide Learning Expectations, Arch/diocesan curriculum standards (local curriculum standards where Arch/diocesan standards don't exist), and other governing authority expectations.*

How effectively has the school developed, implemented, and monitored a financial management system, to support high achievement of all students?

St. Brendan Parish School has highly effectively developed, implemented, and monitored a financial management system, to support high achievement of all students. St. Brendan Parish School uses proper bookkeeping and accounting procedures to create, implement, and monitor the financial position of the school. Using the Archdiocesan Chart of Accounts, Budget Building Factors, Salary Schedule, and data from previous years, an initial draft budget is developed by the school administration and bookkeeper in February. The pastor and the Parish Finance Committee approve the budget. The Principal and the bookkeeper monitor actual income and expenses as they compare with the budget projection. Financial statements are reviewed on a quarterly basis by the pastor and the Parish Finance Committee. The financial report is presented to the school community every year. An outside audit of school finances is undertaken where there is a change of principal or pastor.

Over the past five years, tuition has covered between 79% and 94% of the actual cost to educate each student. The difference is made up by the Annual Fund, the Mothers' Club and Men's Club fundraisers, and the parish First Sunday Collection.

How effectively has the school used external resources to supplement tuition, fees, and fundraising?

The School has highly effectively used external resources to supplement tuition, fees and fundraising. St. Brendan's tuition currently is set to cover 88% of the actual cost. The difference is made up by the Annual Fund, the parent club fundraisers and the parish First Sunday Collection. For example the Mothers' Club will raise well over \$190,000 in a typical year. The Men's Club completely funds the athletic programs. This money is in addition to the funds the families and parishioners contribute through the First Sunday Collection (\$37,000) at church and the Annual Fund, which generates in excess of \$165,000 per year.

Parents also donate extraordinary amounts of time through participation in a wide variety of activities sponsored by the parent clubs.

How effective is the school at planning for its long-term viability?

St Brendan School has highly effectively planned for its long-term viability.

The school's mission is to produce students of the highest quality who will exemplify Christian leadership for the 21st century. The school provides its teachers with funds to continue their professional development and enrichment. The budget reflects financing for curricular improvements. The curriculum is evaluated and updated regularly. Maintaining the physical plant is a priority of the St. Brendan School administration. The school roof, plumbing systems and fire extinguishers are inspected annually; annual asbestos inspections are performed. Emergency measures are in place for the safety of the teachers and the students.

A 61-member Strategic Planning Committee comprised of school parents, teachers, and members of the parish developed a five-year plan to move the school forward into the 21st century. A School Advisory Board has been created to implement the strategic planning goals, and advise the pastor and principal in the areas of mission and philosophy; curriculum; staff; enrollment; community relations; finances; facilities; development; and parent leadership.

The school has a well-organized development plan. A development plan has been in place since 1993 with emphasis on keeping alumni, alumni parents and parishioners involved in the school community through "The Voyager" and invitational activities and events on the school campus. A very strong alumni association is present at St. Brendan and school resources are made available to this organization. The school is in a very good position of financial sustainability and viability for the future.

Chapter 4: The Action Plan

A. Design and Alignment of the Action Plan with the Self Study Findings

Accreditation Factor #11 (*The Action Plan addresses the school's critical goals to enhance student learning that supports high achievement of all students of the Schoolwide Learning Expectations, Arch/diocesan curriculum standards (local curriculum standards where Arch/diocesan standards don't exist), and other institutional and/or governing authority expectations.*)

Schoolwide Lists of Significant Accomplishments and Critical Goals

Schoolwide Significant Accomplishments

1. Introduction of the Youth Ministry program into the school curriculum
2. The creation of a School Advisory Board
3. Systematic disaggregation and analysis of data to inform curriculum, instructional and operational planning.
4. Increased collaboration between classroom teachers and technology teacher to provide activities that support 21st Century learners who collaborate, communicate, and think critically.
5. Full integration of the SLEs into the school community
6. Enhancing of the curriculum with the addition of a counselor and the SEL program to promote schoolwide emphasis on inclusiveness and respect for all
7. Collaboration between principal and pastor
8. Continuing involvement of alumni, alumni parents, and parishioners

Critical Goals

1. Formalize the structure of the school-wide learning support program
2. Implement the Common Core State Standards in math and English language arts
3. Integrate other disciplines with science to improve student performance and help bring together information in a cohesive and comprehensive way
4. Include the classroom assistants in staff development and in-services to better meet the needs of all students
5. Develop a new and improved Schoolwide Learning Expectations (SLEs) report card that allows for students to have a more active role in self-assessment and reporting

How effectively did the school identify critical goals that are focused on improving student learning?

St. Brendan Parish School identified five critical goals. Four of them have a direct impact on improving student learning. These four involve strengthening the Learning Support Program with a formal structure, implementing the Common Core State Standards in math and English language arts, considering science as a lynchpin in a cross curricular approach to teaching students critical thinking and writing, and developing a new approach to measuring the SLEs. The fifth goal – including the instructional assistants in professional development to meet all students' needs – also impacts student learning in that the assistants will be better prepared to

assist the growing number of identified students with learning differences as well as the high achieving students. All of the critical goals were identified in the self study narratives and were supported by data. The Visiting Committee found that the school is unified in its overarching goal that all students will succeed. The identified goals grow from a continuum of curriculum and continual school improvement and serve to move the school even further in ensuring achievement of all students. The administration and staff have done a highly effective job of identifying critical goals that are focused on student learning.

How effectively does the Action Plan align with and address the school's critical goals in order to support high achievement of all students?

St. Brendan Parish School Action Plans address two goals from the self study and one from the school's indepth study for science. Drawn from the self study - Chapter 3D, E, F, and G – the first Action Plan involves the need to formalize the Learning Support Program. As developed in the self study, this program needs definition, data tracking, and structure. The Action Plan is comprehensive, well-strategized, and allows for constant assessment of progress and monitoring. The second Action Plan involves implementation of the Common Core State Standards in math and English language arts. From the self study, Chapter E – SLEs and Standards Based Curriculum – the Action Plan umbrellas the school's implementation of the Common Core Standards and expands the implementation to include inservice, curriculum mapping, alignment of current textbooks, review of ancillary materials, and the evaluation of new texts as well. Finally, the third goal involves integrating other disciplines with science to improve student performance and help bring together information in a cohesive and comprehensive way. Again, this plan is carefully done and involves data from students who are performing in the 25th percentile on standardized tests that shows alignment of science scores with reading comprehension, social studies, reference materials and math. Ultimately, the school aims to improve students' abilities to think critically, synthesize, analyze, and successfully organize ideas and express them in written form. Overall, the three Action Plans together form a highly effective directional document for school improvement and focus on student achievement at St. Brendan Parish School.

PLEASE NOTE: The Visiting Committee is not required to complete either of the next two optional parts. If either or both of these parts are not used, the Visiting Committee should put N/A in place of the narrative. If either optional part is used, the Visiting Committee must have identified and clearly supported the need for this modification or new critical goal in the Report of Findings narrative.

OPTION A: If the finding of the Visiting Committee is that one of the school's critical goals should be modified, the Visiting Committee should write a narrative describing what modifications are needed, and the rationale for these modifications.

N/A

OPTION B: Critical Goal Identified by the Visiting Committee:

1.

If the finding of the Visiting Committee is to replace a school's critical goal in the school's Action Plan, the Visiting Committee should identify which goal is to be replaced, and write a brief rationale for the school to use in incorporating this new critical goal identified by the Visiting Committee into the school's Action Plan. NOTE: Because there can be no more than two critical goals from the Self Study incorporated into the School's Action Plan, the Visiting Committee recommendation will replace one of the school's two critical goals.

If the opinion of the Visiting Committee is to add a critical goal for incorporation into the school's Action Plan in the future, the Visiting Committee should identify which goal is to be added, and write a brief rationale for the school to use in incorporating this new critical goal identified by the Visiting Committee into the school's Action Plan. NOTE: The school's Action Plan evolves over time and new critical goals are incorporated as critical goals are accomplished.

N/A

B. Capacity to Implement and Monitor the Action Plan

Accreditation Factor #12: *The school demonstrates the capacity to implement and monitor an Action Plan that ensures high achievement of all students of the Schoolwide Learning Expectations, Arch/diocesan curriculum standards (local curriculum standards where Arch/diocesan standards don't exist), and other governing authority expectations.*

How effective are the monitoring processes (assessment/evaluation, communication to shareholders, involvement of shareholders in implementing and monitoring the Action Plan, etc.) that are incorporated into the Action Plan?

The school has identified highly effective monitoring processes that are incorporated into each strategy/activity section of the Action Plan. The staff will monitor progress through surveys, observations, standardized test data, data tracking, reports, vertical articulation, and a variety of data and assessments. There will also be a system of monitoring within the structure of shareholders including the School Advisory Board, the parents, and the pastor, who will partner in monitoring through surveys, meetings, reports, and communication vehicles.

How effective is the school plan to evaluate the goals in the Action Plan on the basis of their impact on student achievement?

St. Brendan Parish School has an effective structure of evaluation planned within each Action Plan to determine the impact of their work on student achievement. Data to be regularly reviewed includes report cards, ITBS results, classroom assessments, intervention records, and teacher articulation. The Visiting Committee recognizes and appreciates the school's efforts to provide professional development for the staff in various areas and encourages the school to continue this practice, particularly in analyzing assessments to determine the efficacy of the Action Plan strategies and activities.

What impediments, if any, must the school address in order to accomplish the Action Plan?

While the school identified “personnel change” as a possible impediment to the success of the Action Plans, the Visiting Committee encourages the school to continue inviting consultants to provide objective views of the school’s progress and success with the plans, particularly the science-centered plan. The committee agrees that there is a strong culture of collaboration and shared accountability at the school. This, coupled with consistent monitoring, should result in the school’s success in carrying out the Action Plans.