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Standards Assessment Report

Visitation of Our Lady School

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Prepared for the AdvancED Quality Assurance Review

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Standards Assessment Report

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Introduction & Purpose of the Report

Introduction

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

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

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

Structure of the Report

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

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

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

The focus questions allow the school to expand on and think more deeply about the responses to the

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indicators rubric. The focus questions provide an opportunity for the school to describe the systematic and systemic processes that are in place to support its ability to meet the indicators. The section asks, "How are the practices/processes implemented?"

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

Demographics

Public/Non-public:	Non-public
School Type:	AdvancED - Elementary
Charter School:	N/A
Enrollment:	731
Gender at School:	Co-Ed
Beginning Grade:	PK
Ending Grade:	8
Alternate Beginning Grade:	
Alternate Ending Grade:	
Location Type:	Suburban
Gender at School:	Co-Ed
Religious Denomination:	Christian - Catholic

Standard 1. Vision and Purpose

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

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

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

Definitions of Indicators Rubric:

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

Indicators: In fulfillment of this standard, the school:

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

Highly Functional

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

Highly Functional

1.3 Identifies goals to advance the vision:

Operational

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

Highly Functional

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

Operational

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

Operational

Focus Questions:

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

In preparation for our SACS visit, teachers, parents and students reflected on the vision and mission for Visitation. Realizing that our mission needed a clearer focus, the decision was made to re-write the mission of Visitation. The new mission statement (finalized in May 2006) has been developed through the collaborative efforts of all Visitation's stakeholders. Our commitment to the mission statement is incorporated in all areas of the school day, i.e. curriculum, discipline, parent conferences and other school programs and can be prominently seen in each classroom as one enters.

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

Visitation fulfills its true mission to foster religious growth by providing ample opportunities for students' spiritual development. Daily prayer, our "Living Rosary", Eucharistic Adoration, Stations of the Cross, Weekly Mass and Novena are a few of the events that help to accomplish our mission.

We maintain our student profiles through individual student cumulative records. With the use of Parish Data Systems (PDS), we are able to compile more accurate and timely data which is available to administrators and teachers when needed. Teachers review standardized test scores from year to year to guide them in improving instruction and to identify students for honors classes or Language Lab. Periodically, surveys are administered and results are used to develop strengths and weaknesses.

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

The school leadership in its hiring practices makes every effort to find applicants who model the mission and values of the school. To ensure the success of newly hired staff, they are partnered with an administrator who acts as a mentor. Through professional development, faculty meetings, weekly lesson plans, teacher observations and evaluations, the school leadership ensures that the school's vision, purpose and goals are being met.

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

We annually review the schools mission and philosophy to ensure that it remains current and applicable. The use of teacher reflections and self-evaluations also assists us in this process. Administrative observations and assessments provide additional documentation. Stakeholder surveys provide us with a wealth of information to help make appropriate changes if needed. The principal is open to recommendations from all stakeholders to improve the student performance and effectiveness.

Overall Assessment:

Highly Functional: The school has achieved a wide commitment by all groups of stakeholders to a shared purpose and direction. The school has clearly defined expectations for student learning aligned

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with the school's vision that is fully supported by school personnel and external stakeholders. These expectations serve as the focus for assessing student performance and school effectiveness. The school's vision guides allocations of time and human, material, and fiscal resources. The preponderance of the evidence supports an overall assessment of "highly functional" and is substantiated in the responses to the Indicators Rubric.

Standard 2. Governance and Leadership

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

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

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

Definitions of Indicators Rubric:

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

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

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

Highly Functional

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

Operational

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

Highly Functional

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

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

Operational

2.5 Fosters a learning community:

Highly Functional

2.6 Provides teachers and students opportunities to lead:

Highly Functional

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

Emerging

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

Highly Functional

2.9 Responds to community expectations and stakeholder satisfaction:

Highly Functional

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

Highly Functional

Focus Questions:

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

Visitation of Our Lady School is effective in the establishment, communication, and implementation of policies and procedures for the successful operation of the school. Policies and procedures are established through the use of Archdiocesan and state guidelines, pastoral meetings, administrative team meetings, school board meetings, and current best practices in education. Communication of policies and procedures is achieved through teacher in-service, faculty handbook, as well as the student-parent handbook. Yearly, parents are required to read, sign and return a parent consent form stating that they have read and agree to follow school policies. "Back to School" nights, monthly Co-Op meetings, as well as the use of the school website, all help provide valuable information to parents and outside stakeholders. School leadership ensures implementation of the policies and procedures in compliance with applicable local, state, federal laws, standards, and regulations.

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

Student performance and school effectiveness are obtained through an evaluation system for both students and teachers. Student performance is assessed by the following: teacher assessment, progress reports, quarterly report cards, and standardized testing. School effectiveness is measured through formal and informal teacher observation and assessment, follow-up conference, lesson plans, principal evaluation, and surveys of stakeholders.

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

Visitation of Our Lady provides opportunities for teachers and students to lead and foster a learning

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community through staff/faculty meetings, team leader meetings, and leadership committee meetings. Each grade level has a faculty team leader whose role is to organize and conduct weekly grade level meetings. Additionally, this person acts as a liaison between the grade level team and administration. Teacher leaders are also evident on our SACS CASI Leadership Committee, Bully Prevention Committee and our Discipline Committee. Students are challenged to take on leadership responsibilities through various clubs and organizations. Our student council members are selected by a student vote and other clubs have elected officers. In an effort to create tomorrow's leaders today, we are investigating the addition of a leadership component to our curriculum. Our external stakeholders contribute to the decision making process via our School Board, Parents' Co-Op Club, and the Parish Men's Club. The Principal has an open door policy to allow all stakeholders the opportunity to contribute to the decision making process.

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

To ensure equity of learning opportunities and support for innovations, Visitation employs a School Building Level Chairperson (SBLC) to address students' needs. Guided by our mission, Visitation offers a Language Arts lab for students with special learning needs and utilizes a Title 1 mobile classroom for qualified students. Honors classes for qualifying students further fulfill our mission of promoting "academic excellence." Weekly standardized test preparation is also offered to students in SAT tested grade levels. Teachers attend workshops to allow for professional growth and use cooperative learning, integration of technology, hands-on activities, and alternative assessments. Teachers are encouraged to use a variety of teaching methods to address the multiple learning styles of all students.

Overall Assessment:

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

Standard 3. Teaching and Learning

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

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

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

Definitions of Indicators Rubric:

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

Indicators: In fulfillment of this standard, the school:

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

Operational

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

Emerging

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

Operational

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

Operational

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

Operational

3.6 Allocates and protects instructional time to support student learning:

Operational

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

Operational

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

Operational

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

Operational

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

Operational

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

Operational

Focus Questions:

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

The school ensures that the curriculum, instructional strategies and assessments are aligned and articulated across all grade levels in the following ways. Visitation utilizes the Archdiocesan Standards Based Education (SBE) Grade Level Expectations (GLE) in all grade levels. In addition to Archdiocesan GLE's, state standards are reviewed and used. With each new textbook adoption, a selection committee representing various grade levels is used to review, critique, and choose a new series for the school. Recently, a professional development workshop was held to help teachers analyze SAT scores. The workshop focus was to identify grade level strengths and weaknesses and to then develop action plans to improve weaknesses while maintaining strengths. Additionally, grade level and subject level meetings are held to discuss student skills and expectations across grade levels.

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

Teachers incorporate and utilize research-based instructional strategies by attending continuing education classes to stay abreast of latest trends in education. Through faculty grade level meetings, teachers share information and strategies learned in classes and seminars. The leadership of the school provides financial support and additional professional release days for teachers to attend conferences and workshops. Additionally, the school subscribes to and provides access to various

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professional journals for teachers to reference. A teacher resource section is available to all staff in the library and is updated regularly by the school librarian. The rapid growth of technology has also enabled teachers up to the minute information on a variety of teaching strategies, curriculum, and best practices.

The school encourages academic excellence through various incentives, i.e. honor roll recognition, Principal's List, and Hero Bucks. A school Language Arts Lab and Honors classes are available to facilitate achievement by all. Teacher moderators assist students in extra-curricular clubs and organizations centered around service, academics, and special talents to foster the development of the whole child.

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

The school implements various processes to ensure that teachers are well-prepared and effectively implementing the school's curriculum. This is managed by the school's Curriculum Coordinator who facilitates the continuity of curriculum between grade levels. Faculty and staff meet daily at 7:40 a.m. for prayer and announcements. Grade level team meeting time is incorporated weekly at each grade level to plan lessons, assessments and activities. All newly hired staff are required to attend a full day inservice to provide them with information about school practices and curriculum and an administrative mentor helps them throughout the year. All staff members go through a three day inservice each year to address new practices, policies, and programs. Time is also dedicated to community and team building among members of the staff.

Teachers complete an individual assessment and create a professional growth plan for self improvement. The growth plans requires each teacher to target areas of improvement. Teachers are able to review their performance through results of their administrative observations and evaluations.

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

With the help of a full-time Technology Director and certified Librarian, the school provides every student daily access to information, instructional technology, and media services through a variety of methods. Networked computers are located in all classrooms and the library. In addition, two computer labs are available for instruction, remediation and research. Students have access to the school's comprehensive Intranet, the Internet and the school library's online card cataloging system. The school's website provides extensive information to all stakeholders. Teacher websites, homework links, latest school news and other relevant information can easily be accessed on our school website, www.vol.org. Since Hurricane Katrina, a certified librarian has overseen the restructuring and updating of the school's library which received substantial damage. Students visit the library weekly and are welcomed during non-instructional times. Through an 8g competitive grant our new Science Lab has state of the art equipment. This lab allows for scientific discovery in a hands-on environment. Teachers incorporate technology into the classrooms through the use of LCD projectors, CD's, DVD's and VHS tapes.

Overall Assessment:

Operational: The school implements a curriculum based on clear and measurable expectations for student learning that provides opportunities for all students to acquire requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The school demonstrates evidence of alignment between the curriculum and instructional practices with systematic implementation across the school. Teachers use proven instructional

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practices that actively engage students in the learning process. Teachers provide frequent opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and skills to real world situations. Teachers give students regular feedback to improve their performance. The preponderance of the evidence supports an overall assessment of "operational" and is substantiated in the responses to the Indicators Rubric.

Standard 4. Documenting and Using Results

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

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

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

Definitions of Indicators Rubric:

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

Indicators: In fulfillment of this standard, the school:

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

Operational

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

Operational

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

Operational

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

Operational

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

Highly Functional

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

Emerging

4.7 Demonstrates verifiable growth in student performance:

Operational

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

Highly Functional

Focus Questions:

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

At the beginning of each year, teachers review standardized test scores from the previous year. A SAT test tracking form is utilized to categorize student performance. Teachers are encouraged to develop lessons and vary teaching styles according to the results of the SAT analysis. Each quarter a progress report of student performance and a report card are distributed to each student. Parent-Teacher conferences to discuss student performance are scheduled throughout the school year. The SBLC reviews the records of students not meeting with success and a formal evaluation is performed if needed. Teachers are provided with an updated listing of students with evaluations on file for their review.

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

Teachers are encouraged to assess in a timely manner. Once assessments are returned parental signatures are required. Each quarter progress reports and report cards are provided. Periodic parent newsletters are distributed with information concerning ways to improve student performance and productivity. A full-time guidance counselor is available to meet with students and parents to discuss academic concerns. Parental seminars are also scheduled to provide parents with current strategies to assist in their child's academic progress. Yearly, students in 1st – 7th grades are administered the 10th Edition Stanford Achievement Test. Students in the 4th and 8th grades who will not be continuing in Catholic education are provided with information and resources concerning the LEAP test.

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

Visitation's overall school effectiveness is most accurately measured through our SAT 10 results. Time is spent reviewing and analyzing test results to determine strengths and weaknesses, as teachers, as students, as grade levels and as a school. Other data collected and analyzed include: attendance, stakeholder surveys, honors' statistics, enrollment in extra-curricular, high school scholarships awarded, and MAP and Duke University Talent Search participants, and referral/detention trends.

Results of this data are used to support overall school effectiveness or determine weaknesses that need to be addressed.

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

External consultants provide at school training to the teachers to further understand the data and provide for interventions. Outside professional development opportunities are encouraged. Teachers are provided with access to a series of professional journals both in our school library reference section and through the Internet. Several teachers are also currently pursuing higher degrees.

Overall Assessment:

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

Standard 5. Resource and Support Systems

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

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

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

Definitions of Indicators Rubric:

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

Indicators: In fulfillment of this standard, the school:

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

Highly Functional

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

Highly Functional

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

Highly Functional

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

Highly Functional

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

Highly Functional

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

Highly Functional

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

Highly Functional

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

Operational

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

Highly Functional

5.10 Provides appropriate support for students with special needs:

Highly Functional

Focus Questions:

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

Visitation actively seeks out qualified personnel for all positions. Avenues used to accomplish this include: Archdiocesan referrals, college recruitment, newspaper advertisement, and employee referrals. Visitation's family environment continues to attract numerous alumni to its staff. Seven alumni are currently employed and the average tenure of the faculty is 9.5 years. Over the past few years VOL has worked diligently to ensure competitive teacher salaries with neighboring Catholic schools. Additionally, two added incentives to retain and recruit teachers have been a supplemental bonus for all employees and a percentage tuition discount for teachers' children. New staff members go through an induction at the start of their first year and are paired with veteran teachers/administrators who serve as a mentor throughout the school year. All teachers go through a formal assessment process and meet with the principal to discuss areas for improvement.

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

The school leadership oversees the expenditure of funds and manages a balanced school budget. Funds are allocated to support the school's mission and plans for improvement. Projected and actual school budgets are submitted to the Archdiocese and the church parish finance board for approval each year. Periodic audits are also performed by the Archdiocese to ensure proper expenditure of funds. The Archdiocese is also currently requiring all Catholic schools to use the Quickbooks online financial system. This new system will provide schools with a more comprehensive system of recording financial data. The Archdiocese will also be able to view day to day expenditures for all schools.

Visitation's parents club assists in the efforts to raise funds for the school. Through various fundraisers and the annual Cajun Festival, the school budget is supplemented with over \$100,000 each year. Over

the years these funds have allowed the school to acquire new white boards for all classrooms, playground equipment, computer labs, and SchoolReach messaging software.

Each year the school utilizes state and federal funds to ensure school and student improvements. New and updated textbooks are purchased with 8g and Superior textbook allocations; new library books are funded with Title V monies, professional development opportunities are made available to teachers through Title II funds. Title IV funds provide safe and drug free activities for the students.

As a result of Hurricane Katrina monies were available to assist schools in repairing and rebuilding. Visitation acquired funds through the Federal Hurricane Recovery Act, Louisiana Hurricane Restart Program and the Federal E-rate matching program. These funds were used to reimburse displaced families tuitions or to assist Visitation for unpaid fees and tuition. Restart funds have been used to purchase computers, library materials, classroom supplies and consumables. E-rate funds have been used to enhance the school's computer network and wiring.

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

Safety is a top priority at Visitation. The school campus is enclosed with a fence and all visitors are required to sign in and obtain a visitor's badge at the school office upon entering the campus. All new staff are criminally screened upon hire. All faculty, staff, substitute teachers, and regular volunteers undergo a follow up criminal background check every three years.

The school publishes a crisis intervention plan that addresses procedures to follow in the event of severe weather conditions, intruders, threats and other crises. Time is allocated each school year to review and discuss this plan and the proper interventions to follow.

Additionally, the school complies with all state and local guidelines to ensure the safety of all. Yearly fire and safety inspections are performed by the regulating agencies. All classrooms post emergency exit maps and monthly evacuation drills are practiced with the students.

A school wide discipline policy is in place to promote a safe and orderly school environment among students. Parent surveys reflect that 98% of respondents feel that Visitation provides a safe and orderly environment for their children. Teachers and staff are assigned daily duties to provide for proper supervision of all students. A list of responsibilities while on duty is listed in the faculty handbook. A dismissal plan is in place to ensure the safety of students as they are dismissed to buses and cars. Parents are required each year to provide a list of authorized individuals who are allowed to check out students.

A bully awareness committee was created this school year to discourage bullying of any form on the school campus. The committee is comprised of the school's guidance counselor, students, teachers and parents.

The school's website, as well as the SchoolReach communication system, can notify parents of any safety or emergency situations which may occur.

Each year the Archdiocese requires all teachers to be inserviced in the safe environment program. The purpose of this program is to alert teachers to the signs of child abuse and the appropriate steps to follow if a teacher suspects that a child is being abused physically, sexually, or emotionally. An

additional component to this program is a class for the students, which is conducted annually by a VOL faculty member.

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

Visitation's guidance counselor, administration, and teachers collaboratively act as a support staff to meet the needs of all students.

Each year the administration reviews students' standardized test scores and permanent records to determine eligibility for honors classes, resource lab, Title 1 services, and extra curricular activities (MAP & Duke Talent Search).

Throughout the school year, classroom teachers work closest with the students and are most often the initiator of concerns. Once identified, the teacher discusses concerns with the administration and then refers the student to the counselor. Visitation has the luxury of a full time, certified counselor to assist students with guidance and services. The counselor works with students to provide academic counseling which may include discussions with parents, teachers and SBLC teacher. The SBLC chairperson is instrumental in arranging a formal evaluation, speech or behavioral screening if necessary.

For the past two years, the school has had the privilege of partnering with Our Lady of Holy Cross College and the Lions Club to identify students with vision and hearing deficits. All students in Pre K, 1, 3, 5, 7 have been screened, as well as any child suspected of deficiency.

The guidance counselor is also available to address students' emotional concerns. This can be done on a one-on-one basis, group sessions and classroom presentation. Parenting seminars and school newsletters also assist parents in addressing students' needs. Since Hurricane Katrina, we have had the services of the "Fleur de Lis" Program to help students requiring additional outside interventions.

Overall Assessment:

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

Standard 6. Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

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

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

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

Definitions of Indicators Rubric:

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

Indicators: In fulfillment of this standard, the school:

6.1 Fosters collaboration with community stakeholders to support student learning:

Highly Functional

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

Highly Functional

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

Operational

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

Operational

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

Operational

Focus Questions:

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

The school's leadership ensures that the school is responsive in many ways to the community expectations and stakeholder satisfaction. The school board has an open forum for parental and community input. Additionally, the principal is a member of the school board, Co-Op club, finance board, and pastoral council for the church parish. These organizations work collaboratively to guarantee the school's commitment to this community. The school administration and faculty are challenged to uphold and fulfill the school's mission and to produce graduates which will be contributing members to society.

Stakeholders can view information about the school and accomplishments of VOL students on the school's extensive web site. Events, activities and calendars are updated regularly so all stakeholders can stay abreast of what's happening at VOL. Information is also regularly published in the local newspaper, church newsletter and weekly bulletin.

In an effort to encourage open communication, all administration, faculty and staff have voice mail and email accounts.

Throughout the school year, the school looks to the surrounding community for guest speakers to enhance the curriculum.

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

Developing a learning community is at the heart of Visitation's mission. Students and teachers alike are challenged to be lifelong learners. Teachers serve as role models for their students as they take part in workshops, attend conferences and enroll in university classes to broaden their knowledge base. Annually, the school budgets funds for professional development of teachers. An additional professional development release day is afforded to all teachers each school year. A teacher's resource library is set up in the school's library with professional journals, books, and staff development videos.

Teachers were recently inserviced on the interpretation of standardized test scores. An action plan was devised to address ways to improve test scores. In an effort to familiarize students with testing practices, all tested students complete a standardized test preparation class each year. This class aims to alleviate test anxiety and build confidence while increasing scores.

Students are encouraged to fulfill the school's mission and always strive for academic excellence. Each quarter students are recognized for academic success. Students also participate in Scholastic Book Fairs, academic competitions, art and essay contests, and extra-curricular clubs. Additionally, Visitation sponsors and encourages participation in the Scouting program.

A learning environment is also encouraged by the use of a school wide discipline plan which helps to ensure optimum teaching throughout the school day.

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

Visitation communicates information to its stakeholders concerning students, their performance, and

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school effectiveness through quarterly progress reports, report cards, parent teacher conferences, signed test papers and behavior reports.

Visitation utilizes many different avenues to communicate information about students, their performance and school effectiveness. The school uses the marquee in front of the school to display important information as well as to recognize achievements of students. Parents receive e-mails & phone calls about important school news through the use of the School Reach communication system. All stakeholders have access to the school's website which lists information for parents, students, alumni, and outside stakeholders. The school publishes a monthly calendar with a special feature titled "Did You Know?" which highlights accomplishments of our students and teachers. Publications in the local newspaper also communicate to the community our school's effectiveness.

Monthly Co-Op meetings, back-to-school-nights, periodic newsletters, parent teacher conferences and open house all provide communication to all stakeholders about Visitation's programs, activities, and curriculum.

Overall Assessment:

Operational: The school has the understanding, commitment, and support of stakeholders. School personnel seek opportunities for collaboration and shared leadership among stakeholders to help students learn and advance improvement efforts and can demonstrate good participation by some stakeholder groups. The preponderance of the evidence supports an overall assessment of "operational" and is substantiated in the responses to the Indicators Rubric.

Standard 7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement

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

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

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

Definitions of Indicators Rubric:

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

Indicators: In fulfillment of this standard, the school:

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

Operational

7.2 Engages stakeholders in the processes of continuous improvement:

Operational

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

Operational

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

interventions to achieve improvement goals:

Operational

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

Operational

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

Operational

Focus Questions:

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

Prior to embarking on SACS accreditation, Visitation yearly took part in the Archdiocesan School Improvement Plan (SIP). SIP required yearly documentation of any school changes as well as listing the school's strengths and weaknesses with a plan to address any weaknesses. The SACS process has been an unusually long one due to Hurricane Katrina. The school made initial application in 2003 but our school visit was postponed because of the hurricane. Consequently, over the past 5 years the faculty and staff have met numerous times to evaluate the school's effectiveness. Throughout these discussions teachers have become more reflective on their role and ways to improve.

Annually both administrators and faculty complete a growth development plan. Included in this process is a self assessment and goal setting exercise. The assessment and goal setting have empowered teachers to look for ways to enhance their teaching methods and become more effective teachers.

Inservice programs at the beginning of each year are planned with input from the teachers and as a result of individual assessments and goals. Recent workshops have discussed critical thinking, positive classroom management, interpreting standardized test scores, and discipline.

Planning for the future, Visitation is in the process of constructing a Multi-Purpose Building to meet the needs of all its stakeholders. This facility will include new early childhood classrooms, a gymnasium, stage, classrooms and meeting rooms.

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

Spiritual and academic development is at the very core of Visitation's mission. Students are inspired to develop their spirituality through an incorporation of Catholic faith and values throughout all areas of the school curriculum. Daily prayer, religion class, and weekly Mass validate our school mission. Students also participate in school sponsored activities such as monthly adoration, Way of the Cross, novena, CYO, living rosary, and sacramental programs. A commitment to service and helping those in need provides students with an opportunity to imitate Christ. This is accomplished through monthly food drives, toy collections, & charitable donations.

Test data is analyzed by administration and teachers to determine areas for improvement. Data is reviewed for school wide trends, grade level trends, class trends and individual student trends. Action plans are then devised to address the results found. A professional development workshop was held this year to assist teachers in the interpretation of test scores.

Teachers prepare lessons and activities to motivate and inspire students to grow both spiritually and academically. Weekly lesson plans and grade level team meeting minutes are turned in each week for the principal's approval.

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

The process being implemented to ensure that the school personnel are provided professional development and technical assistance is multifaceted and ongoing. An in-depth inservice is planned at the beginning of each school year to discuss and introduce various new and improved strategies and methods of teaching. Two additional staff development days and monthly early dismissal days are scheduled throughout the school year. Teachers are also provided with an extra professional development day to attend conferences or workshops. Monies from the school budget pay for teachers to attend workshops and conferences.

A full time technology director assists teachers with the integration of technology into the curriculum and development of teacher web sites. Several teams of teachers have also taken part in the summer InTech Institutes sponsored by the Jefferson Parish Public School System.

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

The school improvement plan and mission were developed with input from faculty and staff thus assuring a high level of agreement. Open lines of communication are achieved by presenting the school goals and objectives to various stakeholders such as School Board, parents, and Archdiocesan leadership.

Monthly faculty meetings and administrative team meetings are used to discuss progress.

Overall Assessment:

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

Conclusion

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

Focus Questions

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

The most prevalent theme which emerges from this instrument is the incorporation of the Catholic faith and its values and traditions in all aspects of the day. This being the true purpose of a Catholic school, we take on this responsibility and include the Catholic faith in all areas of the curriculum.

The dedication of our faculty to meet the individual needs of students is a second theme that becomes evident when reviewing our responses. Several programs help to identify individual student's needs and help them in achieving academic success.

A third trend that becomes apparent is our school's strong commitment to keep all stakeholders informed. Communication is an integral part of a school's success and through numerous avenues we reach our stakeholders with current and important information.

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

Visitation has many strong qualities of which we are very proud.

A safe and nurturing family atmosphere makes Visitation an attractive environment for teachers, students and parents. This type of atmosphere is most conducive to learning.

As a Catholic institution we have a moral obligation to meet the needs of all students both spiritually and academically in an effort to form tomorrow's leaders today. Our incorporation of the Catholic Identity Standards throughout the curriculum helps us to accomplish these goals. Additionally, Visitation offers many academic programs which aim to meet individual academic needs.

With an eye toward the future, a Multi-Purpose Building is being constructed for the needs of our student body. Upon completion this facility will include a gymnasium, auditorium, and early childhood facilities. This building when occupied will strengthen our students both academically and physically and will enable us to offer additional services.

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

We are blessed to have an extensive computer network on our campus; however, it is not being fully utilized. Realizing that the ability to use technology is now a necessity instead of a luxury, it is our belief that we need to increase the use of technology (both by faculty and students) into the daily curriculum.

Critical thinking skills are needed in today's workforce. It is apparent that improvement is needed in this area as evidenced by our standardized test scores, thus emphasizing the need for better analytical skills in some students.

Another challenge for us is teacher recruitment and development. Efforts must be made to increase the salary of our teachers to stay competitive. Additionally, staff development is an area of concern.

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

Creating this document has allowed us to take a more in depth look at who we are and what we do.

This instrument has begun to help us evaluate and implement strategies to meet our challenges and correct our weaknesses. Additionally, it has enabled us to reflect on the role that each stakeholder plays in this process of continuous improvement.

Through this quality assurance review, we will use results to further refine our program, curriculum and mission to best meet the needs of our stakeholders.