

REPORT OF FINDINGS

ST. AGATHA CATHOLIC SCHOOL
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PORTLAND, OR 97202
ARCHDIOCESE OF PORTLAND



IMPROVING STUDENT LEARNING 2012

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

NOVEMBER 18-20, 2015

REPORT OF FINDINGS

for
E415 ST. AGATHA CATHOLIC 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. Agatha Catholic School for working together to make the school a loving, caring, and learning environment. We pray that the good work that you have done and the plans that you have made for the future will help you become an even better school.

The team found our three days at St. Agatha professionally rich and personally rewarding. We experienced a community where everyone is striving to provide a Catholic environment where quality education is a priority. The partnership that exists between the community of students, teachers, parents, administration, and the parish is truly a gift of the Holy Spirit and a tribute to everyone's care for the community.

We wish to thank all of you, pastor, principal, faculty, staff, parents, 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

The visiting committee affirms the self-study process began in the spring of 2014 with an annual review of the prior accreditation's action plan and with the formation of the leadership team. The principal, new to St. Agatha in 2014, worked with a Principal Advisory Committee (PAC), to help with the accreditation process and ensure that all St. Agatha stakeholders were informed and involved throughout the self-study process. Parents, students, and staff were surveyed in the fall of 2014. The school successfully implemented three listening sessions for parents and parishioners that reviewed and shared survey data and allowed for a town hall style discussion. Survey data and notes from these listening sessions were shared with faculty and staff. They were given time to review the feedback, discuss trends and highlights, and suggestions for goals. During the 2014-15 school year, the leadership team wrote chapter 2 and updated Appendix A and B. The principal and leadership team allowed appropriate staff meeting time to collaborate and write the chapter 3 sections. The PAC then revised their document and collaborated with the School Advisory Council and the Commissioner of Accreditation for feedback. The visiting committee affirms that this process was very effective in gathering feedback from all stakeholders to assess St. Agatha's program. Parents, parishioners, and faculty all indicated that they felt very involved in the self-study and were communicated with appropriately throughout the process.

In winter of 2015, the mission, philosophy, and the SLE statements were revised, approved by the School Advisory Council (SAC), and published in several school and parish publications. In the spring of 2015, the list of significant accomplishments and opportunities for growth were developed and discussed among all stakeholders. The entire faculty and staff determined which

goals to develop action plans for in order to direct the school for the next 3-5 years. Once chapter 4 was shared, revised, and reviewed by the Diocesan Director of Accreditation, the final self-study was shared with all stakeholders. The visiting committee commends St. Agatha School for aligning its goals and action plans with the SAC's 3-5 year strategic plan.

The principal is a very capable leader and was instrumental in truly leading the self-study process under significant time constraints. Being new to St. Agatha so close to an accreditation visit, presented certain expected challenges. The principal was successful and strategic in learning the culture, history, challenges, and accomplishments of the school and parish. The visiting committee commends the principal and leadership team (PAC) in overcoming these challenges to fully evaluate current strengths and opportunities. The school should also be commended for their efforts and ability to establish a well-thought out and planned process.

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.*

The visiting committee observed that St. Agatha School was highly effective in involving all stakeholders in completing the self-study. The members of PAC all participated on other accreditation teams in order to become familiar with the self-study protocol and the accreditation process. The visiting committee observed substantial evidence to suggest that the self-study represents the efforts of all stakeholders, and great efforts were made to ensure that all stakeholders were involved in every step of the self-study process.

School parents, parishioners, and students were surveyed and the data from those surveys were shared and discussed throughout their process. The school received an 81% return rate for the parent surveys. The principal was strategic in getting everyone involved in the self-study process and held several discussion groups with stakeholders. Their input to create meaningful goals, strategies, and action items to drive improvements in student learning was valued. The visiting committee commends him for his planning, communication strategies, and for keeping the process focused.

During fall of 2014, the school revised its mission, philosophy, and SLEs following a systematic and deliberate approach. Newsletters and classroom bulletins communicated the SLEs. The faculty and staff are currently revising rubrics to assess these expectations and effectiveness of the revised mission and philosophy statement. Parent interviews affirm that they were very involved in the process and actively engaged with their own children in the development and use of the school's SLEs. Interviewed students were able to articulate connections between the school's mission, philosophy, and SLEs to their experiences of learning, faith, and service.

Moving forward, the administration and faculty plan to continue to reach out to stakeholders through annual surveys and events, while responding to needs of all students and parents as they arise. The visiting team supports the principal's plan to communicate and update progress toward completion of the school's goals with all stakeholders' involvement.

Chapter 2: Context of the School

A. School Profile

St. Agatha Catholic parish school is located in the historic Sellwood neighborhood of Portland, Oregon. The parish serves 416 registered families and has been educating kindergarten thru 8th grade students for 103 years. The visiting committee observed that the school has successfully compiled and analyzed demographic, financial, survey data, and discussion group data to help complete a self-study process. Evidence affirms that the administration, faculty, staff, and advisory committees annually applied updated data to guide future forecasting, strategic planning, and to make decisions regarding marketing, tuition rates, development, and to monitor recruitment/retention of enrollment.

Currently, St. Agatha's Pre-K thru 8th grade enrollment is 226. Maximum class size is 25 students per class (28 maximum in middle school). Enrollment is currently at 86% capacity. Seventy four percent of the students are Catholic. The students continue to benefit from experienced, educated, and dedicated faculty and staff. The average teacher has been working at St. Agatha for seven years, with 60% holding a Masters degree. The faculty indicated that the reason they stay at St. Agatha is the family atmosphere created by strong bonds among teachers, parents, students, and current administration. This has enabled the school to maintain a stable environment with high caliber instruction.

In addition to core subjects, the school program offers music, art, library, technology, and physical education. The school facility is relatively new, having been rebuilt between the years of 2003 and 2007. In addition to homeroom classrooms, the school houses a technology lab, music room, library, science lab, and a Learning Support Center (LSC). The school also offers before and after care with a variety of co-curricular programs and an after-school sports program through CYO.

Over 25% of the students receive services from the Learning Support Center, formerly known as the Harris Learning Center. The school hopes to increase support for their diverse learners, including students with special needs. The school has already hired some aide support and has begun to provide professional development for all teachers on how to support diverse learners. The school collaborates with the University of Portland's PACE (Pacific Alliance for Catholic Education) program, enabling the school to staff an additional trained teacher to work with identified students with minimal impact to the budget. The school continues to monitor the cost benefits of increasing enrollment of the LSC students.

Overall enrollment decreased with the economic downturn, but it is starting to rebound. The school has studied other trends beyond the economy that could cause enrollment to decline. There are several other Catholic Schools within a small radius around St. Agatha, creating competition for empty seats. The economic rebound in the surrounding area is creating opportunities and challenges for young families and for the school. The school benefits from a 90% retention rate from Pre-K to kindergarten. Since 2009, the overall enrollment has risen 9%.

The school attributes this to a strengthening economy, overcrowding public schools, and successful marketing plans. St. Agatha also attributes this gain to the fact that the community is aware that St. Agatha admits students with diverse needs. The school community and stakeholders are well aware that enrollment continues to be a priority for the financial viability of the school. These concerns have been addressed at a variety of strategic levels at both the school and the parish. The school will need to address the balance between the costs associated with providing a rigorous program and staffing, rising fixed cost, and finding sources of revenue beyond tuition. Enrollment will continue to be a key to the school's operational abilities.

Parent and student surveys and interviews were very positive overall, pointing to the sense of community and feeling of family at the school. Parents and students also like the small class sizes, service learning, dedicated staff, Catholic identity, student support, and student morale. Some parents indicated the desire for adding a foreign language curriculum at all grade levels, updating security, and an increased presence of the pastor. With that, they acknowledge that the current administration has been very responsive to their desires and has worked within his budget constraints to address all parent needs and concerns, including adding a Spanish elective for 8th grade.

At the time of the survey, some middle school students reported not feeling safe at school. The administration and faculty surveyed the students and parents again to learn the reasons why. After listening to the reasons and the implementation of some anti-bullying curriculum, the students responded that the actions taken made a positive difference in making students feel safe. The students also acknowledged that they feel blessed with the current faculty, saying that they all feel well cared for and safe with all their teachers. Students communicated that their teachers care about the whole person.

Academically, 46% of the students say they feel challenged. The school is exploring methods to differentiate instruction in the classroom. Students like electives, participation in weekly Mass, and service learning opportunities.

The visiting team found the principal, pastor, faculty, and Administrative Councils all collaborate to continually assess and improve student learning. The staff remains focused and dedicated to meeting the needs of their students by analyzing data to guide instruction. Catholic high school admissions directors, alumni, and parents report that St. Agatha students graduate well prepared to meet the challenges of high school.

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.*

The visiting committee observed that St. Agatha School has been effective in the use of prior accreditation findings and other pertinent data to make progress in supporting the achievement of all students. The visiting committee acknowledges that the school's new principal had one full school year to become familiar with the goals and action plans from the 2009-2010 self-study. He used this accreditation as a necessary guideline to improve the curriculum and Catholic identity where all students, no matter what level or ability, can continually learn.

In 2009-10, the school wrote three goals. These three goals include: address the need for a school-wide writing program, to update curriculum and materials in accordance with Archdiocesan guidelines, and to develop and utilize assessments to better track academic progress from year to year. During the prior accreditation visit, the visiting committee replaced two critical goals for the school and added action items and timelines for completion. One of the added goals was to streamline financial reporting to truly reflect the impact and role of the Harris Literacy Center (HLC) and "Friends of St. Agatha" (FSA) trust account on the school budget. The second added goal was to align the current curriculum guidelines with the school's curriculum.

After the implementation of the prior visiting committee's recommendations, the years of 2009-2013 were a financial struggle for the school. The school budget did not reflect the financial impacts of two stand-alone entities, The Harris Literacy Center and the Friends of St. Agatha Trust. Once streamlined, the financial reporting of the HLC and the FSA truly reflected the financial impact on the school budget; the resulting debt absorbed by the school.

The visiting committee learned the school had no clear operational budget or reporting guidelines prior to the arrival of the new principal and commends his efforts to follow and implement the written goals of the prior accreditation. He went beyond those efforts to follow a Diocesan approved budget process immediately. A business manager was hired for the school. The Friends of St. Agatha Trust is professionally managed by a committee, which includes the pastor and lay parishioners with financial backgrounds. The trust was restructured since the last accreditation to improve its focus on sustainability, growth, and communication with the school.

The second written goal added by the prior accreditation team was to align the Archdiocesan curriculum guidelines with the school's curriculum. Since the last accreditation, the school wrote action plans for their math, science, social studies, and religion in-depth studies that are aligned with the goals from the prior accreditation. The evidence provided to the visiting committee affirms that the school has purchased textbooks and other instructional materials that are consistent and aligned with Archdiocesan curriculum guidelines. The faculty and staff interviews affirm that the current administration has addressed their former curriculum concerns and addressed the goals and action plans from the prior accreditation.

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.*

The visiting committee observed that St. Agatha's curriculum is aligned with Roman Catholic teachings, follows the approved standards based religion curriculum set by the Archdiocese of Portland, and aligns with the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB) standards. The teachers are effective at using current textbooks and other approved materials to deliver a standards-based religion curriculum that focuses on learning, faith, and service. The entire school community attends Mass on a weekly basis with all students actively involved in preparing and participating in readings and music. In 2015, classes began rotating to attend a second daily Mass to connect with parishioners and expose students to the experience of regular daily Mass. The school celebrates Holy Days and Feast Days of the church and students participate in Reconciliation during Advent and Lent. Prayer tables are visible in each classroom and other materials throughout the school help students remember the liturgical seasons, people in need of prayer and support, and the power of God. It is very evident that prayer and service is a priority at St. Agatha Catholic School and is an integral part of the school's mission. Several examples of service projects, notwithstanding mandatory service hours for middle school students, affirm that Catholic identity is a major priority for the students. The interviews with the pastor, parents, and students also affirm the school's claim that service, leadership, and faith are used to assess student learning and the Catholic identity of the school.

The school maintains an active partnership with parents in the spiritual and academic education of its students. Parent surveys indicated a need for more opportunities for them to guide both their own spiritual growth and their children's faith development. The pastor, parents who attend weekend Mass, and parishioners also expressed a desire to see more school parents regularly at weekend Mass with them. In January 2015, St. Agatha School formed a Catholicity Committee to address these two concerns and to assess the parish-school connection and the Catholic identity of the school. The data collected from this committee was then shared with the parish council, school advisory council, and the staff. Several suggestions were made to strengthen the connection between the school and the parish. This is well documented and will only strengthen the Catholic identity of the parish school while encouraging the parish to capitalize on the school as a ministry of the parish. Both the pastor and principal collaborate often and take suggestions from their committees and councils and have already implemented some of the action items.

A majority of students are proud and express that the school works hard to maintain its Catholic identity. They appreciate the opportunities provided by a small Catholic community where they are invited to altar serve, join youth group, and participate and help lead Mass. The visiting team was impressed with the students' ability to articulate the connection between religion class, service projects, SLEs, and their opportunity to attend Masses. Students reported that the pastor, Fr. Nathan Zodrow, and their teachers fully support them in their faith development.

St. Agatha strives to make Catholic identity a pervasive part of the academic culture by extending the religion curriculum in all subject areas. *Project Genesis* ties together standards of religion and health. The visiting team found evidence of student work where religion and Catholic values were tied to curricular areas of language arts, art, social studies, and science. The teachers are committed to developing unit plans with the “Understanding by Design” framework to incorporate a Catholicity component to their lessons. Scope and Sequence charts are shared with teaching specialists (computer, art, music) to ensure cross-curricular opportunities strengthen Catholic identity.

All faculty and staff who teach religion regularly participate in faith formation and Archdiocesan Catechist Certification. The principal, with the support of the pastor, has led the faculty in this endeavor and continues to seek new creative ways to support the faculty and staff in individual and group faith formation. Faculty and staff also participate in retreats, other faith formation conferences and in-services, and in the evaluation of the religion curriculum.

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.*

The visiting committee observed that the school is the primary mission and ministry of St. Agatha Parish. The school, parish, priest, and staff infuse Catholic values and traditions into all aspects of school and student life.

St. Agatha’s mission statement effectively incorporates their three pillars: learning, faith, and service. It is clearly posted in all classrooms. The visiting committee observed this mission in action through student participation in Mass, classroom atmosphere, interactions between students and teachers, and interviews with the faculty and students.

The Catholicity Committee spent time aligning the Mission Statement to the Philosophy Statement. The school worked in tandem with all stakeholders throughout the revision of these two documents. The team observed evidence of written drafts from school professional development days in preparation for accreditation. Posters of this work were available in the visiting team’s workroom. These drafts were reviewed and edited by the School Advisory Council, parent groups, and the pastor. Changes were made to reflect the school’s Catholic identity. Surveys of parents, students, staff, and parishioners supported this.

In creating the revised SLEs, one of the primary goals of the staff was to create a succinct and accurate reflection of expectations for a St. Agatha Catholic School student. The rewrite reflects the school’s focus on a strong Catholic identity and connection to the mission and philosophy. Assemblies were held monthly to introduce, teach, and practice the newly revised SLEs. During the pre-visit, the visiting committee was able to attend a school wide assembly to review and celebrate the culmination of the study of the SLEs. At this assembly, each class took one SLE and modeled its understanding for the school. Awards are given daily to students who exhibit

one or more of the SLEs. The SLEs are clearly displayed in each classroom and teachers refer to them when discussing work and behavior with their students. During the visit, one team member witnessed a teacher asking a student to refer to the R in PRIDE and adjust behavior accordingly.

The students use the SLE vocabulary to communicate the importance of the three pillars in their personal and spiritual development. At the parent meeting with the visiting team, several parents shared stories about the SLEs and how they learned the SLEs along with their children. They reported that the SLEs were part of daily homework, oral quizzes, and family discussions. The principal reports that the staff is currently working on rubrics to measure and assess the effectiveness of the SLEs.

More than 90% of parents surveyed gave high ratings for effective faith formation education of their children. Fr. Nathan has affirmed that this is also his impression of the work being done at the school. In the visiting team's meeting with students, they unanimously echoed the sentiment of a true Catholic identity in themselves, their teachers and the school.

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.*

The visiting committee observed that St. Agatha Catholic School has numerous organizational structures in place to support high achievement of all students. The mission, philosophy, and SLEs are affirmed and supported by the School Advisory Council, the administration, and the pastor. A Catholicity Committee comprised of teachers, parents, administration, parishioners, and the pastor, was formed to ensure that the Catholicity of the school remains strong. Both the school and parish actively promote the Catholic identity of the school through brochures, newsletters, the school website, and school and parish events. Community service is at the core of the school, and the visiting team observed evidence of the many and varied opportunities for students to serve their school and community. Middle school students have additional opportunities to serve their school community through the Youth Ministry program. The parish and school community are committed to strengthening the Catholic identity of the school. The Learning Support Center (LSC) is an integral part of the St. Agatha School community. Two certified teachers and support from classroom aides are helping to address the growing needs of these students. The LSC staff also includes a teacher from the PACE program who is employed full time. The staff currently serves 51 students including 25 students with active ILPs. Accommodation plans are written by the Learning Support Center staff with the classroom teachers. Parents, as the primary educators of their children, are also involved in the process. The principal meets weekly with the LSC staff as well as with the middle school staff to discuss the needs of these students.

A variety of assessments are used to measure student performance. The visiting committee observed evidence of both formative and summative assessments. Learning outcomes were visible in classrooms and students were actively engaged in the learning process. Technology is integrated when possible and used in classrooms. Teachers have identified a need to increase

technology integration throughout classes. This would require additional training and support in increasing teacher confidence and comfort in using technology with students and assuring technology tools are used to enhance learning. In addition, this will require the school to maintain, replace, upgrade, and repair current technology.

The Iowa Test of Basic Skills was replaced in 2014 with the new STAR assessments. This assessment is aligned with Common Core Standards. The staff is committed to analyzing data from STAR assessments and implementing curriculum to support high achievement of all students. Using data analysis from STAR assessments, DRAs, curricular standards, and teacher observations, the staff works to design lessons that are rigorous for high achieving students, yet provide scaffolding to support students who need additional help. Students formally take the STAR assessment four times per academic year. The assessment is also administered informally at the discretion of the classroom teacher. The staff is undergoing Archdiocesan training to analyze and effectively utilize the data from this assessment. Teachers analyze data from ITBS, STAR, DRAs and other formative assessments to track and differentiate instruction for all students. This data is communicated to parents through classroom newsletters, Option C (the school's communication system), graded papers and projects. Teachers have started to implement a portfolio assessment program for the entire school population. The visiting team observed varied assessments throughout the classrooms and student work in the school's hallways.

The visiting team observed evidence of leadership opportunities for teachers and staff. Middle school teachers attended two seminars on executive functioning and have presented the information to the entire staff. Ongoing teacher training will continue to improve student learning.

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.*

The visiting committee observed that St. Agatha Catholic School faculty and staff is highly effective in their use of educationally sound assessment processes to collect data. The teachers also effectively disaggregate and analyze student performance data and use their analysis as a basis for instructional/curricular improvement.

The school faculty uses data about faith formation to strengthen the school's Catholic identity. In response to student and parent surveys, St. Agatha Catholic School revised, edited, published, and clearly communicated their SLEs to all stakeholders. This data has strengthened their Catholic identity as observed in class discussions, artwork, and student-led Masses. The school's SLEs are taught, assessed, and reported to parents. This deep meaning of faith was present and observed in all subject areas and classrooms. It is assessed more informally through classroom observations and Storm Pride cards.

St. Agatha Catholic School uses educationally sound assessment processes to collect, disaggregate, and analyze student performance data. The school currently uses STAR testing for Early Literacy, Reading, and Math four times a year. This assessment is done school wide, and the assessment results are available immediately. When completed, teachers use screening reports for each grade to disaggregate data and write intervention plans as necessary. The assessment also shows longitudinal growth for each child. The visiting committee observed data sheets and data related question sheets that show clear data disaggregation and analysis processes are in place. The visiting committee also observed instructional planning sheets and planned interventions based on data, both in the school's report and being acted out in classrooms. Prior to the adoption of STAR, St. Agatha used ITBS as its prime formal assessment. Teachers use and analyze REFLEX Math and DRA2 data for an in-depth view of individual student competences on math facts and reading language skills. These formal assessments drive teacher instruction as observed in student portfolios, LSC pullout instruction, and classroom reading groups. Finally, the visiting committee observed student portfolios, which follow students throughout their time at St. Agatha and compile data from each grade, subject area, parent communication, and social experience to provide teachers with a snapshot of that child's learning and what they need to be successful at St. Agatha. The school has been highly effective at using data to assess, drive and improve instruction for all learners.

The school uses all assessment data to modify teaching, learning, and to provide support to all students. The visiting committee observed the use of technology to support differentiation of all learners both in the general education classrooms and specialist classrooms. Meeting the needs of students in the first quartile should continue to be monitored and assessed. Teacher and pastor discussion expressed concern that the school must be able to support the needs of students with diagnosed special needs before enrolling them at St. Agatha.

St. Agatha staff is highly effective in analyzing current assessment and new STAR data. The staff indicated that they would benefit from more time to dialogue about test scores across grade levels and use test scores to revise curriculum school-wide annually.

E. High Achievement By All Students Toward Clearly Defined SLEs and Curriculum Standards

Accreditation Factor #7: *All students make acceptable and measurable progress toward clearly defined Schoolwide Learning Expectations and challenging, comprehensive, and relevant curriculum standards.*

The Church is “the primary classroom in the student’s lifelong journey of faith.” –Fr. Nathan Zodrow, pastor, St. Agatha Catholic Church

The visiting committee observed that students are making acceptable and measurable progress toward clearly defined School-wide Learning Expectations and challenging, comprehensive, and relevant curriculum standards. The revised Student Learning Expectations are in place and students are very familiar with how they tie in with the three pillars: faith, learning, and service. Students and parents are very aware of the role of the SLEs in driving the Catholicity of the school and the curriculum. The STORM PRIDE acronym was created to help students remember

and focus on the expectations for both growing academically and in their faith. At the parent meeting, it was evident that the parents had a very good understanding of the SLEs and had input in revising some of the expectations. Leveled rubrics have recently been developed to measure student progress towards demonstration of the SLEs. They are in the process of being refined and implemented.

There is a very strong sense of Catholic identity at St. Agatha from the moment you enter the school. There is a positive relationship between the pastor and principal, and they both share a common vision of the school's need for a strong Catholic identity and strong academic program. It is clear that Catholic identity is woven into all curriculum areas at St. Agatha School.

St. Agatha teachers are committed to guiding each student's growth and achievement towards meeting the rigorous and challenging curriculum standards set by the Archdiocese of Portland. Scope and sequence and the use of curriculum maps help guide teacher instruction. The team saw evidence that teachers are using the Understanding by Design (UbD) training for unit planning. The faculty and staff effectively use the six instructional assistants for push in and pull out services and to provide small group instruction for students struggling to make acceptable progress. Most students felt challenged, but some students indicated that they would like more challenges offered across the curriculum.

During the staff interview, the faculty expressed appreciation that they have current curriculum and instructional materials. Multiple assessments are used to measure student progress. In 2014, the Archdiocese of Portland implemented the STAR testing program. This program provides teachers with immediate feedback for students who need assistance as well as identifying students requiring more challenges. The visiting committee listened to examples of how students are being challenged in the upper quartile. Providing enrichment opportunities needs to be an ongoing consideration. Using testing data, teachers are able to plan interventions for students. Teachers meet frequently as a whole group and in leveled groups to analyze assessment data.

St. Agatha provides a Learning Support Center for students who are not making acceptable progress. The PACE program provides an additional teacher to assist the lead specialist. A myriad of extra support is offered both during and after school to meet the varying needs of the students who might need extra help with academics or organization. As evidenced by the parent meeting, it is clear that St. Agatha seeks to provide assistance to students from all backgrounds and needs.

The integration of technology is a benefit of St. Agatha, and the school understands the important role in 21st century learning. According to the parents, one of the reasons they choose St. Agatha is because of the integration of the current hardware students have access to at school. Classroom observations provided evidence that teachers are using document cameras, Chrome books, and share other recently acquired technology. The principal, along with the grant writing committee, wrote grants to secure the budget for new technology acquisition and training. The use of technology ties in nicely with service opportunities, academic support, research, and current events in age-appropriate ways. The visiting committee observed that most lessons involving technology occur in the computer lab. A technology teacher instructs students in

technology skills and appropriate digital citizenship. The use of further technology integration will better prepare students for the 21st Century.

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.*

The visiting committee observed that the faculty is highly effective at applying 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, and ongoing faith formation. The visiting committee attended Mass where teachers served as Eucharistic ministers. Teachers modeled Mass responses strongly, and the student body clearly followed their teachers' good example. The staff also attends Mass together on staff development days. The pastor and the principal are clearly spiritual leaders to the faculty and students.

The research based instructional methodology is evidenced by the highly engaged students observed by the visiting team as well as a 90% approval rating given to the school by parents surveyed. ITBS/STAR testing data shows year to year grade equivalent growth from 1.1 to 1.9 years in reading and math. The school uses curriculum standards approved by the Archdiocese of Portland and State of Oregon. Teachers use supplemental materials to complement the curriculum. Scope and sequence charts help plan for yearly progress which is also monitored by student portfolios; both were observed by the visiting team. Teachers set professional goals based on observation and feedback. They are committed to staff development and avail themselves of numerous professional development opportunities.

St. Agatha School is highly effective in using assessment to modify instruction. Assessments are varied and numerous. Teachers are taking advantage of the immediate feedback provided by STAR testing to monitor progress, report to parents, and differentiate instruction. The visiting team saw evidence of testing data notebooks and student portfolios. Student portfolios monitor student progress over time and facilitate teacher communication between the grades.

The school has been effective in integrating technology that they currently have into the teaching/learning process. The school has document cameras, laptops, projectors, Chrome books, iPads, and a 3D printer. Students attend technology class, and technology is integrated somewhat across the curriculum. On a student led tour, the visiting team saw visible excitement evidenced by the students using available technology in the classrooms, and especially the 3D printer in the technology lab.

The staff set goals and teachers expressed a need during faculty/team meeting for additional technology devices for increased access for more students. The staff also sees a need for increased staff development to train teachers on effective methodologies for enhancing curriculum with technology tools. They also set goals for more opportunities to practice, develop, and implement the information learned during professional development, as well as increase meaningful differentiated instruction and methodology.

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.*

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 SLEs and Archdiocesan curriculum standards.

St. Agatha School has highly effective programs that are rooted in Catholic values. The visiting committee observed students and families attending Mass. Student, parent, and teacher surveys and interviews indicated that students and their families believe that Catholic values are evident in every aspect of St. Agatha Catholic School.

The parish provides opportunities, with the school's support, for completion of the Sacraments including First Reconciliation, First Communion, and Confirmation. During the year, the school participates in Stations of the Cross, prayer services during Advent and Lent, and prayer opportunities throughout the liturgical year. Every morning begins with all school student led prayer. Prayer is integrated throughout the school day.

Families are active in the parish through service learning opportunities, such as, Knights of Columbus Spaghetti Dinner, Parents In Partnership (PIPS) encouraging "Friendraising", active participation in weekly and weekend Mass. Students are actively participating in service learning projects at a classroom level and independently for service learning hours in middle school.

The visiting committee observed a highly effective program providing service learning, electives, after school activities, and enrichment. The LSC will pull out students who are not making acceptable progress, will write an Individualized Learning Plan for those students, and implement those plans. This program has brought many students with learning differences to St. Agatha. Teachers acknowledge that, while it is important to make Catholic education available to all, it is still important to be realistic on the services that the school can provide.

While acknowledging the work done with the identified 25% of the student population who receive services in the Learning Support Center, staff acknowledged that more can be done for both these students and high achieving students. The high achievement in math seems to be adequately differentiated, especially in the Middle School through the Algebra option and the 3-5 grade EnVision Math program. The visiting committee observed differentiated reading groups and novel units. The visiting committee observed opportunities outside and inside the curricular day for students, such as band, youth ministry, CYO sports, leading school assemblies and Mass, being a teacher helper, peer tutoring, and the middle school elective program.

St. Agatha Catholic School has prepared for emergencies through the school safety program. Students are well practiced in safety procedures. Safety procedures are posted in each classroom, and there are monthly drills for student preparedness. Emergency bins are present in classrooms. Walla Walla Nursing School provides a student nurse two days per week. The school's maintenance supervisor does regular safety inspections and the fire marshall and health inspector come annually. St. Agatha staff is certified in CPR/First Aid every other year.

St. Agatha Catholic School has effectively used parent and community resources to assist students. Through approved grants and Title I and II funding, St. Agatha has acquired some additional technology resources and teacher training for classroom differentiation. The visiting committee observed the use of shared iPads and Chrome books in classes.

St. Agatha has identified support services needed to support high achievement of all students. As identified through staff interviews and goals, there is a need for increased technology integration to support the needs of all students. They have identified the need for increased staff or coaching support in the LSC and to consistently address the needs of students in the mid to upper quartiles.

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.*

The visiting committee used the data from St. Agatha's self-study and met with the principal, business manager, and a member of the parish finance council who is an independent certified public accountant and who does monthly audits of the school's finances. This meeting was scheduled to fully understand how the school uses and manages its financial resources and development to support high achievement of all students. Since the major restructuring of finances in fall 2014, the school now is operating within its means and began the 2015-16 with a balanced budget following sound accounting practices that are in line with Archdiocesan guidelines.

The faculty and staff are now gifted with the curricular and instructional materials needed to implement a rigorous curriculum for all students. The visiting committee affirms that the commitment to update much of the curriculum was necessary to achieve the previous accreditation goals. Through grant writing, the principal has been able to allocate and budget for technology resources and begin integration in the future. The visiting committee commends the principal for engaging the entire school and parish community in the restructuring of finances, and communicating to all stakeholders how financial accountability will positively impact student learning and the long term financial health of the school. St. Agatha is committed to funding a strong academic program, remaining accessible to the community with low tuition rates, and ensuring the overall school program is sustainable for the future.

In addition to the aforementioned financial management improvements, the principal has been successful in securing grants. The Harrington Family Foundation awarded the school a grant that allowed the purchase of additional learning materials and computer programs for the Learning Support Center. His grant writing also helped the school acquire a 3D printer to enhance and promote interest in technology. Another technology grant from the Juan Young Trust in 2015 was used to purchase a mobile cart with 30 Chrome books for students. Title I funds are being used to support students who are below benchmark. Title II funds are used to support staff development.

Moving forward the visiting committee is confident that the necessary steps have been made to ensure that St. Agatha's management of resources is in place. The focus should continue to be managing costs without sacrificing the strong academic program or the spirit of St. Agatha. Challenges of tuition rates to cover real costs of education and finding additional outside sources of income remain. The school realizes that it must continue to host fundraising events that include school and parish participation, rely on the Friends of St. Agatha Trust, and control costs whenever possible.

The administration and business office will need to closely monitor the budget with proper oversight in place, seek out additional funds and grants to grow the program without using operational funds, and plan for continued sustainability as costs of staffing and maintenance continue to rise. St. Agatha continues to strive to reach their student maximum capacity in all grade levels and analyze potential cost saving measures that will maintain the quality of the school's program. The visiting committee is confident that this new administration is making the right decisions and practices in resource management to support a bright 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 (the eight most significant determined by the VC)

1. Increase focus on and support for service learning opportunities K-8. (3A)
2. The mission, philosophy, and student learning expectations have been revised with input from and communication with all stakeholders in the community, and communicated with regularity to all stakeholders. (3B)
3. Staff uses the principles of Understanding By Design in unit planning to align curricular standards to instruction. (3B)
4. Adding a Science Lab and Technology Lab, and upgrading our infrastructure. (3C)
5. Better data conversations with STAR assessment reports (3D)
6. Purchased new curricula in math, science, language arts, and social studies, matching the State of Oregon and Archdiocese of Portland standards (3F)
7. Increased staff development using Title II funds (3F)
8. Creation and implementation of a Learning Support Center (3G)

Critical Goals (identified by St. Agatha School)

We believe the five goals that will have the greatest impact on student learning are:

1. Continue data conversations with grade level groups on how to meet the needs of both high and low achieving students (3D) and Increase in differentiated instruction across the grade levels (3C)
2. Increase technology integration throughout classes (3G)

3. Assess the number of students requiring additional support from the Learning Support Center, and ensure this need is adequately addressed with proper staffing:student ratio (3C)
4. Further develop the Catholic Identity of the school by strengthening the Parish School connection and providing opportunities for students to understand and express what it means to be Catholic. (3A)
5. Improve students' knowledge and understanding of the SLE, and communication of progress toward SLE goals using rubrics. (3D)

The visiting committee observed and is strongly confident that the critical goals identified by St. Agatha School were selected with improvement of student learning as the main motivation of the stakeholders who were engaged in this self-study. The visiting committee also affirms that the rationale and strategies for all of the school's stated goals are strongly aligned with the school's mission, philosophy, and SLEs. In addition, all of the critical goals, and their action plans that support them, are strongly connected to the faculty and staff's analysis of student performance data, the demographic make up of the students enrolled, and school's desire to sustain a rigorous curriculum focused on 21st Century learning skills.

The first goal to continue data conversations with grade level groups builds on the strengths of the individual teachers in data analysis and disaggregation, helps ensure that differentiated instruction strategies support achievement of all learners, and supports the planning and implementation of best practices in planning instruction across all grade levels.

The second stated goal is to increase the integration of technology throughout the classes. The visiting committee saw evidence that St. Agatha students have limited access to some technology in a computer lab, a class set of Chrome books, and some iPads. The visiting committee saw evidence of high student engagement and learning when students were using these afforded tools. This goal of the school is to move technology seamlessly from the computer lab and into the classrooms. Most important, this goal incorporates effective strategies to train the teaching staff so that students will not just have more devices, but that teachers are able and comfortable to effectively use the technology as a tool to improve the student learning process.

The third critical goal is to increase support for the students with special needs. St. Agatha educates 51 students who receive support from the school's Learning Support Center (LSC), including 25 students with a formal diagnosis and Individual Learning Plans. The action plan focuses on providing tools to classroom teachers to use in their classrooms to best meet the needs of the students in their classrooms. The goal also supports the Archbishop of Portland's call to provide a Catholic education to all who seek it, including students with special needs. The school has decided to specifically focus on executive functioning skills, which extend to improving student learning skills beyond those with special needs.

The visiting committee affirms that the school is highly effective in developing specific strategies, with appropriate timelines to support all three measurable goals. The action plan also identifies appropriate implementation strategies and solid baseline and ongoing assessment strategies to align with reasonable timelines.

OPTION A: *Modification of a critical goal:* N/A

OPTION B: *Critical Goal Identified by the Visiting Committee:* 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.*

The visiting committee observed St. Agatha accomplished all of their goals from the previous accreditation cycle. The school purchased grade level appropriate components and materials for a school-wide writing curriculum. They fully addressed the added and modified recommendations of the prior visiting committee, in addition to their stated goals. This visiting committee is confident that the current principal's strategic ability will ensure that their stated goals will be completed according to the timelines. The strategies involve the communication and involvement of all stakeholders necessary to complete the action plan.

Since finance and budgeting consideration needed to fully implement their goals are part of the five year strategic plan, the principal will have support from his School Advisory Committee, Friends of Saint Agatha Trust, and the parish by ensuring the funding will be in place. Since the school has a balanced budget the visiting team is confident that the critical goals will become a reality within the school. Ultimately, the students will benefit from the implementation of the strategies.

The visiting committee observed a strong commitment by all faculty and staff to the high achievement for all students. One challenge to the completion of St. Agatha's action plan is that all responsibilities for monitoring, implementation, and assessment fall to the already hard working principal and teachers.

Visiting Committee Summary Thoughts:

Throughout the visit, the visiting committee was in awe of the strong sense of community and family amongst the faculty, staff, parents, and students. This noticeable connection and partnership was clearly communicated directly as a major strength of the school in every single stakeholder interview. The students of St. Agatha Catholic School feel blessed to be part of such a supportive parish school community where they have several opportunities to attend Mass during the week and be actively involved in learning about their faith. With the recent revision of the SLEs, the students and the parents both fully understand how the SLEs connect with the mission, philosophy, and overall school program. The students are commended for their

articulation of the three pillars of learning, faith, and service and how they connect to the many learning opportunities they are afforded by the strong, faith-filled faculty and staff.

