

Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

3.1: *Every student is offered timely and regular opportunities to learn about and experience the nature and importance of prayer, the Eucharist, and liturgy.*

I. What does this benchmark indicate for school performance?

This benchmark is about schools providing multifaceted approaches on ways to be Catholic in accordance with its mission, and to help students draw closer to God. Schools should articulate an understanding of Catholicism that is relevant to the lives of its students and create fresh and adaptive experiences that inspire students to encounter God. These approaches should be assessed for their effectiveness with student input to the process.

II. As a review team member, what evidence do I look for?

These are some questions which will help to frame this item:

- Are students initiating and leading prayer in multiple forms?
- Do students openly share ways they witness their faith?
- Do all adults explore prayer with students?
- Do students play an active role in the planning of liturgies?
- Do students enjoy the opportunity to be ministers during the liturgy?
- Do students have a joyful understanding of the Eucharist?
- Do the homilies teach and inspire students to be Christ for others?
- Do homilies illustrate how the Gospel and the scriptures relate to the context of students' lives?
- Does the music selected for liturgies enliven students?
- Is there a process in place to gather input and assess the effectiveness of the various opportunities for prayer, Eucharist, and liturgy at the school?

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3.1: *Every student is offered timely and regular opportunities to learn about and experience the nature and importance of prayer, the Eucharist, and liturgy.*

III. What are the key differences between the levels of the rubric?

At level 3- Fully Meets Benchmark,

students encounter relevant opportunities to learn about prayer and its relationship to the Eucharistic and larger liturgical life of the Church.

At level 4-Exceeds Benchmark,

students take a leadership role in the prayer life of the school. Students are involved in liturgical planning and evaluation. Liturgy has a special role in the life of the school and is celebrated in a variety of forms on a regular basis.

At level 2-Partially Meets Benchmark,

students pray regularly but prayer is led by adults. The liturgical life of the school exists through its expression on feast days relevant to the school or the Church as a whole.

At level 1-Does Not Meet Benchmark,

the prayer lives of students are absent or are displayed in a way that does not connect with the lives of students or the tradition of the school. Liturgical celebrations are absent, or are a minimal part of the school's routine.

Note: To measure these benchmarks accurately, the *student voice* out to be be a significant part of the process used to evaluate this item.

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IV. What are some key suggestions for improvement?

To move from level 1 to level 2,

- Partner with students to explore online and local resources about praying.
- Interview members of the school community about how and why they pray.
- Find creative projects to collect and share the findings.
- Encourage students to write letters to area priests inviting them to celebrate the Eucharist with them during the year.
- Explore the structure of Catholic liturgy.

To move from level 2 to level 3,

- Develop a shared understanding of the purpose of prayer and invite students to create a prayer book or an online archive of prayers, prayer videos, etc.
- Explore and reflect on the language of the Last Supper with students to help them develop a personal connection to the celebration of the Eucharist.
- Expand students' appreciation of the liturgy by training and designating students in liturgical ministry roles for school liturgies.

To move from level 3 to 4,

- Encourage the presider to visit with the students in advance of the school mass (virtually or in person) to help the presider connect to the joys, anxieties and hopes of the student body.
- Train students to plan liturgies and make this a student leadership opportunity.
- Default to student-composed or student-led prayer at all school-wide prayer times.
- Connect with Catholic college student ministry teams (or alums of the school) to witness ways young adults are leading faith-driven lives.

V. What are key terms for common understanding? (Refer to NSBECS Glossary for the key terms listed below.)

Presider
Joy
Student voice

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3.2: *Every student is offered timely, regular, and age-appropriate opportunities to reflect on their life experiences and faith through retreats and other spiritual experiences.*

I. What does this benchmark indicate for school performance?

This benchmark is about schools committing resources of time, space, and funds to provide students with meaningful and joyful encounters with God within the parameters of the school schedule. It is about demonstrating the value of spiritual reflection as a timeless life skill, central to our students' achievements. It is about putting spiritual reflection on par with academics.

II. As a review team member, what evidence do I look for?

These are some questions which will help to frame this item:

- Are the costs associated with student retreats accounted for annually in the school budget?
- Are retreats differentiated by age-level?
- Do retreat leaders meet with students ahead of time to learn about the students' joys, anxieties, and hopes?
- Does the retreat planning process include a meeting between the relevant school stakeholders to discuss the school's mission, charism and retreat outcomes?
- Do students play a role in the planning of the retreat?
- Do retreats provide a genuine departure from a typical school day?
- Is the retreat evaluated? How extensively?
- Do retreats provide students with fresh and innovative ways to recognize God in their lives?
- Do retreats and spiritual experiences encourage students to be Christ for others?
- Do retreats allow students to encounter the Catholic tradition from a new perspective?
- Are retreats and spiritual experiences focused on youth and joyful?

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3.2: *Every student is offered timely, regular, and age-appropriate opportunities to reflect on their life experiences and faith through retreats and other spiritual experiences.*

III. What are the key differences between the levels of the rubric?

At level 3- **Fully Meets Benchmark,**

students are presented with at least one organized opportunity to engage in a retreat experience under the direction of qualified personnel. Students play a role in the planning of the retreat so it deals with their life experiences in the larger context of the faith.

At level 4- **Exceeds Benchmark,**

students are presented with multiple retreat and reflective experiences throughout the year which they assist in planning under the direction of qualified personnel. These experiences are designed to continuously provide students with an awareness of God's love and God's presence at work in their lives. Schools highlight their traditions to discover methods and practices that reflect the deeper spiritual heritage of the institution.

At level 2- **Partially Meets Benchmark,**

students are offered retreat or reflective experiences rarely, and have little role in the planning of these experiences. The presence of qualified personnel to direct these experiences is sporadic. The experiences bear little relevance to students' lives.

At level 1- **Does Not Meet Benchmark,**

retreats or sustained reflections are not a part of the students' experience.

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3.2: *Every student is offered timely, regular, and age-appropriate opportunities to reflect on their life experiences and faith through retreats and other spiritual experiences.*

IV. What are some key suggestions for improvement?

To move from level 1 to level 2,

- Begin to develop a retreat budget.
- Take steps towards placing the retreat and spiritual experiences at the center of the school's life.
- Invite students to gather evidence of God working in their lives and explore creative ways this evidence can be shared.
- Work across the building to swap classroom space for retreat activities so students experience a disruption of their location within the school day.

To move from level 2 to level 3,

- Expand resources in the retreat budget.
- Calendar student retreats while other major school calendaring is being done. Coordinate retreat programming with your school's mission and charism.
- Invite students to focus their community service projects to just one charitable organization and prepare for the retreat by fostering gratitude for those operating the charity and empathy for those being served by the charity.
- Build programming that readies and deepens students' experience of the liturgical seasons of Lent, Advent and Christmas.
- Utilize online prayer platforms.

To move from level 3 to 4,

- Foster a sense of retreat as an on-going journey.
- Provide regular opportunities for students to journal about their journey.
- Support a student blog on their faith experiences pre and post retreat.
- Hire experienced retreat leaders to collaborate with students and renew retreat program.
- Collaborate with students to choose a retreat theme for the year. Let this theme be woven into academic subjects.
- Partner with area parishes, colleges, and community centers to find alternative retreat spaces.

V. What are key terms for common understanding? (Refer to NSBECS Glossary for terms listed below.)

Blog

Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

3.3: *Every student participates in Christian service programs to promote the lived reality of action in service of social justice.*

I. What does this benchmark indicate for school performance?

This benchmark is about schools creating a coordinated process for service that requires all students to participate. It is about harnessing students' natural desire to connect school-based learning with the wider world. It provides students with the opportunity to demonstrate central tenants of their school's mission by living their faith with others, for others, as Jesus taught.

II. As a review team member, what evidence do I look for?

These are some questions which will help to frame this item:

- Do students have an age-appropriate understanding of why they are doing service?
- Do school leaders, teachers and students discuss how the mission of the school informs service program opportunities?
- Do service program leaders (including students) meet with charity leaders to understand the mission of the charity?
- Do students connect the meaning of the Eucharist with their community service?
- Are service projects designed to elevate students' understanding of social justice including an awareness of the systems that oppress others in your wider community?
- Do students collaborate in selecting the charities the school will serve?
- Are students given age-appropriate responsibilities in coordinating service programs?
- Are students given time to reflect before and after a service project, comparing their expectations with realities, worries with joys? Is this reflection structured?
- Are schools documenting their work, finding ways to measure the impact they are making in their service projects?
- Do schools follow up with charities to understand ways to improve on the support they want to offer?

Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

3.3: *Every student participates in Christian service programs to promote the lived reality of action in service of social justice.*

III. What are the key differences between the levels of the rubric?

At level 3- Fully Meets Benchmark,

all students participate in a service program that is integrated within the social justice teachings of the Church. Within this context students reflect on their experiences in the light of the Gospel values that animate the school's mission

At level 4-Exceeds Benchmark,

all students discern from a variety of options and engage in service learning that is integrated within the social justice teachings of the Church. Matching their talents and interests with the needs of the community students reflect on their experiences in the light of the Gospel values that animate the school's mission. Students indicate how their experiences have broadened and deepened their understanding of their faith in action.

At level 2-Partially Meets Benchmark,

some students participate in service programs that are tied into the liturgical year. Opportunities to reflect on the experience in the light of the Gospel are sporadic.

At level 1-Does Not Meet Benchmark,

students are not required to participate in a service program that incarnates the Gospel in a meaningful way. Reflection is not part of the service process.

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3.3: *Every student participates in Christian service programs to promote the lived reality of action in service of social justice.*

IV. What are some key suggestions for improvement?

To move from level 1 to level 2,

- Initiate conversations with students about the mission of the school and ways to express it in service to others.
- Invite students to research area charities.
- Learn the mission of these charities and determine which charity the school is best able to support in this initial stage of developing a community service program.
- Organize ways the school can begin to support each charity.
- Delegate aspects of the project across the school, integrating social justice learning into the curriculum where appropriate.

To move from level 2 to level 3,

- Deepen the school's partnership with a charity.
- Consider developing a service program that, over the course of the students' years, allows students to take on more sophisticated projects for a charity. This approach provides the school and charity to have a stronger mutually beneficial partnership, where the charity's deeper and more constant challenges are met by students and staff who have grown to understand the charity and the complexities facing those it serves.

To move from level 3 to 4,

- Promote service that is global and local.
- Allow students to reflect on Eucharistic themes of unity and diversity as students witness God in the lives of those so far away, who perhaps live in very different circumstances.
- Have students plan special liturgies featuring unique prayers and liturgical music native to that global region.
- Deepen the school's partnership with an area charity by utilizing students' gifts and talents to serve the charity.
- Encourage students to blog about what they are discovering about social justice, the steps they are taking toward solidarity with God's people, and what it means to be bread for others through their ongoing service with local and global communities.

V. What are key terms for common understanding? (Refer to NSBECS Glossary for terms listed below.)

Social justice

Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

3.4: *Every student experiences role models of faith and service for social justice among the administrators, faculty and staff.*

I. What does this benchmark indicate for school performance?

This benchmark looks to engage the “community” in community service. Catholic schools strengthen their mission and Catholic identity by intentionally bolstering the relationships of all its community members. There is a lack of authenticity to school-wide service if it only calls upon the students, some teachers and parents to act. This benchmark also necessitates a vibrancy of Standard 4, where school administration, faculty and staff feel comfortable and encouraged to share and deepen their faith together.

II. As a review team member, what evidence do I look for?

These are some questions which will help to frame this item:

- Do all administrators, faculty and staff take time together to pray, especially for students?
- Do administrators communicate this expectation with candidates during the hiring process?
- Are students comfortable asking faith-based questions in each class?
- Do students seek out different adults for sharing and receiving advice?
- Are conversations regarding service projects welcome in all classes or are they relegated to religion class?
- Do students know which charities or causes their teachers are active in?
- Are there public records witnessing the commitments adults have made?
- Do all administrators, faculty and staff have responsibilities in the school service projects?
- Do all administrators, faculty and staff discuss what a faith role model is, and share resources to develop this role continuously?

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3.4: *Every student experiences role models of faith and service for social justice among the administrators, faculty and staff.*

III. What are the key differences between the levels of the rubric?

At level 3- Fully Meets Benchmark,

all students have active relationships with school personnel that model a commitment to faithful service. The school emphasizes its commitment to teaching and practicing social justice in multiple ways. Hiring practices reflect this commitment.

At level 4-Exceeds Benchmark,

all members of the school community model a commitment to faithful service. The school emphasizes its commitment to teaching and practicing social justice in multiple ways. Hiring practices reflect this commitment. The school's commitment to this value is well communicated to all stakeholders and the public at large.

At level 2-Partially Meets Benchmark,

there are several role models of faithful service throughout the community who encounter students. Some administrators and faculty demonstrate the practice of social justice within the community. Hiring practices do not make this component of faculty service a priority.

At level 1-Does Not Meet Benchmark,

there is not an overt commitment of the school community to social justice or faithful service. A consideration of faith integrated into a service outlook is not a requirement for administrators or faculty.

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3.4: *Every student experiences role models of faith and service for social justice among the administrators, faculty and staff.*

IV. What are some key suggestions for improvement?

To move from level 1 to level 2,

- Commit to Standard 4 by providing all people working in the school community with ways to deepen their faith lives.
- Work to build trust between school administration and faculty and staff.
- Reflect on scripture that illustrates faith role-modeling.
- Require the staff to engage in service projects.
- Survey students about how teachers help them to encounter God.

To move from level 2 to level 3,

- Sponsor a series of conversations among all people working in the school community about role modeling by asking them to identify someone who has been a faith role model for them.
- Share stories and identify what elements made the modeling effective and meaningful.
- Empower employees to foster these elements with certain students in the context of a school-wide initiative.
- Assess what methods are effective with students and plan to expand the faith role modeling effort in a greater capacity.
- Continue developing goals articulated in Standard 4 benchmarks.

To move from level 3 to 4,

- Champion faith role-modeling school wide by empowering all stakeholders with the tools and time to develop relationships (using as many unique pairings as possible).
- Create faith reflection groups comprised of different stakeholders and grade levels.
- Work with these groups as the school prepares and debriefs community service projects.
- Think outward about how the school can be a role model of faith to other organizations and those in need of care and kindness.

V. What are key terms for understanding? (Refer to NSBECS Glossary for terms listed below.)