



Executive Summary

Saint Leo Catholic School

Diocese of Charlotte

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Introduction

Every school has its own story to tell. The context in which teaching and learning takes place influences the processes and procedures by which the school makes decisions around curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The context also impacts the way a school stays faithful to its vision. Many factors contribute to the overall narrative such as an identification of stakeholders, a description of stakeholder engagement, the trends and issues affecting the school, and the kinds of programs and services that a school implements to support student learning.

The purpose of the Executive Summary (ES) is to provide a school with an opportunity to describe in narrative form the strengths and challenges it encounters. By doing so, the public and members of the school community will have a more complete picture of how the school perceives itself and the process of self-reflection for continuous improvement. This summary is structured for the school to reflect on how it provides teaching and learning on a day to day basis.

Description of the School

Describe the school's size, community/communities, location, and changes it has experienced in the last three years. Include demographic information about the students, staff, and community at large. What unique features and challenges are associated with the community/communities the school serves?

Executive Summary: Part 1 - Description of the School

St. Leo Parish School is located in the central North Carolina Piedmont Triad in the Buena Vista neighborhood in Winston-Salem and is one of nineteen Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Charlotte. The Catholic Parish of St. Leo serves Catholic families at Wake Forest University, Baptist Hospital and medical facilities, Hanes Mall, Reynolda Village, and Old Salem. St. Leo Parish has over 1500 registered families and defines the school as one of its apostolates. The Pastor Fr. Brian Cook is the chief Administrator of church and school. Fr. Cook, an alumnus of Catholic education, witnesses to the importance of the Catholic School environment in the formation of the faith and is enthusiastic in his support of the school.

Founded in 1953, today the school offers a comprehensive program for 250 students. This includes a part-time preschool program for three and four year olds. Our traditional all day K through eighth grade Catholic School program is faith based and offers an academically excellent curriculum. The school draws Catholic and other faith students from Winston-Salem and a radius of about 20 miles that includes families from King, High Point, Kernersville, Clemmons and occasionally Mocksville.

St. Leo Parish School celebrated our 60th year anniversary in 2013.

Until the early 20th century, North Carolina had very few Catholics, and was in fact considered mission country! The Benedictine Order founded Belmont Abbey, a Benedictine College, to promote the Catholic faith in western North Carolina, and the Benedictine Fathers began mission work in Forsyth County in 1886. In 1942, St. Leo Parish was transferred from the charge of the Benedictine Order to the Diocese of Raleigh, and its first pastor, Michael J. Begley, was appointed. The following year, Father Begley (later Bishop Begley, first Bishop of the Diocese of Charlotte) welcomed the Sisters of St. Joseph from Chestnut Hill, Pennsylvania. Having opened a convent on Georgia Avenue, the sisters first taught only Religion, Art, and Piano, but in 1949 they opened the Villa Maria Anna Academy, the first Catholic grammar school in Winston-Salem, NC. In 1953, with the purchase of property next to St. Leo the Great Catholic Church, St. Leo Parish School was born. (The Villa continued to operate as a high school, the forerunner of Bishop McGuinness Catholic High School, currently located in Kernersville.)

An extensive renovation to update facilities was completed in 2002. The parish grounds include the church building, with an attached 2-level parish center which houses our preschool three year old program; the convent which houses the Pre-K four year old classroom and Resource classroom, and the original school single level building containing the K-5th grade homerooms, art lab and gym. In 2002 a three-level Middle School wing was attached to the gym with Youth room, Media center, computer lab, Science lab and 6,7,8th grade and Music classrooms. We continue to move in the spirit of the philosophy of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Philadelphia who began in 1943 to tutor students of the parish. That philosophy states: "While guiding our students to acquire skills, learn concepts, see relationships, and make judgments, we honor responsible freedom. True education leads a person to discern and love truth, to follow right reason, to reverence God and all His creation." We are blessed to have a Sister of St. Joseph as our first grade teacher as well as our religion and liturgy coordinator.

The staff at St. Leo Parish School is comprised of 16 full and 15 part time personnel. Georgette Schraeder, OFS, the principal for eighteen years, leads the school in its day to day operations. The Faculty is noted for its experience, leadership and best practices throughout the diocese. Specifically St. Leo Faculty currently provides Teacher leadership on the Diocesan Board, Writing Committee, District Steering

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Committee and Curriculum committee. Faculty share competencies as presenters at local, regional and national professional development programs. Principal, Teacher and staff contracts, evaluations, and expectations are coordinated through the Catholic Schools office, located at the Pastoral Center in Charlotte. In addition daily pastoral and educational administration input is provided on-site.

The goal of a Catholic School is to enhance what a child has already received at home. St. Leo Parish School tries to build on the faith experiences that children bring with them. Together the home and school can bring children to the realization that Jesus is the person who should really guide and count in their lives. For over sixty years through the efforts and partnership of dedicated administration, parents, teachers, and staff, St. Leo Parish School is a place where students learn to be active members of their faith community and responsible citizens of the world.

Our PTO functions to provide a framework whereby parents and school can share in the process of educating our children. It strives to maintain continued communication between the home and school. The Parent/Teacher Organization raises money primarily through fundraisers. Money raised by this organization directly benefits the students by funding our art program, enriching the library, and purchasing various teaching materials/resources for the classrooms. PTO carries out numerous other projects which help maintain a pleasant atmosphere for all students, faculty, and staff. Last year, our PTO sponsored Spring & Fall Family Picnics, celebrated our 60 year anniversary with an Adult Social and Auction at WinMock in the Fall; sponsored Catholic Schools Week activities and provided volunteers for the 5K/10K Race. Funds raised were used this spring and summer for interactive projectors for Grades 3, 4, Science, 8 and computer room. Also a 3D printer, desks for kindergarten and chairs for 1st grade, several computers and licenses for teachers, 8th grade holocaust history program and the St. Leo endowment fund were recipients of PTO funding. All parents and teachers/staff are considered members of this association and are encouraged to volunteer their services. Volunteer help is vital to the operation of our school community and there is a place for every person to help.

The St. Leo Parish School Board is an advisory body serving to oversee PTO and Athletics budgets and providing recommendations to the administration regarding policy and planning (see section 4 of this report).

The Parish Finance Council and Parish Finance Director maintain the finances and budget process and details with Pastor approval. Enrollment has stayed steady over the past five years with strong support from the parish - 97% of students are Catholic. Enrollment in the past five years has been steady. While we recognize the need to increase diversity in the student population and faculty, most (84%) of the population is Caucasian. There has been an overall increase in our multiracial/black population in the last three to five years, positively affecting our diversity. Percentage of male and female varies in individual classes, but is mostly equal. The percentage of students receiving tuition assistance has increased providing economic diversity. Tuition is funded through parish subsidies, Annual Giving Campaign, Diocesan Capital Assessment and Individual/Family Fees.

The school calendar is divided into trimesters. The School day is 8am-3pm with before and after school care and a variety of extracurricular Clubs and sports.

School's Purpose

Provide the school's purpose statement and ancillary content such as mission, vision, values, and/or beliefs. Describe how the school embodies its purpose through its program offerings and expectations for students.

Executive Summary: Part 2 - School's Purpose - Mission and Beliefs

Mission Statement: "Our mission at St. Leo Parish School is to educate the whole child within the framework of Gospel values and Catholic Traditions in order to develop responsible citizens of the world."

"Educate the Whole Child": Staff and Parents confirm through surveys that the school mission clearly expresses a commitment to catholic identity and student success. Students can recite the mission statement by heart. We are a place of encounter - integrating faith life with education and society. Administration, Staff, Families, and Parishioners come together as the community Parish school. Community is the base from which children learn to use all of their talents and gifts to reach out to the world.

"Framework of Gospel Values": Catholic education is education for life. Through Catholic education, we seek to prepare our children to proclaim the Good News and to translate the proclamation into actions. In this way our students will help themselves and others to become true Catholic Christians. Our goal is to encompass personal holiness and to initiate social reform in the light of Gospel values. (Adapted from To Teach As Jesus Did #7).

"Catholic Traditions": Children participate in weekly liturgies as altar servers, lecturers, cantors and choir members. Each class, kindergarten through eighth grade, plans readings, petitions, and presents offertory gifts. In 2nd grade students prepare for First Reconciliation and First Communion. In 8th grade our students are prepared to receive the sacrament of Confirmation. The entire school rejoices with the 2nd and 8th grades by giving gifts of their own joyful creations on the occasion of the sacraments. Parents are always welcome to join us at all prayer services. Middle School students have a special period (SIP) to share and pray together with their staff advisor. Living Stations, Christmas pageants, Catholic Schools Week, Ash Wednesday, Saint Day celebrations, and Retreats help instill Catholic tradition.

At St. Leo School, prayer is integrated into the daily routine. Prayer begins our day, our meals, and our classes. Prayer enables us to be appreciative and respectful of all God's blessings. Prayer is an integral part of our shared time and our personal life.

"Responsible Citizens of the World": Advent and Lenten Outreach projects are part of the preparation for Christmas and Easter.

Prayer partners (older grades team with younger grades) meet often to share prayer, projects, and play. Caring Friends letters connect students to elderly parishioners, seminarians, and ill friends.

Recently the 8th grade sponsored a Night with St. Nick for the younger students. Profits were donated to Make-a-Wish and the Veterans Memorial. Classes collect for Catholic Charities weekly. Families donate to Parish Holiday Outreach, disaster relief as appropriate. Our Student Council serves as Tour guides during Open Houses. The Student Council also coordinates with the AV Club to provide WLSL monthly Broadcasts for the morning announcements and prayer. Student Council organizes and maintains a prayer wall for special community prayer intentions.

Administrators, faculty and staff serve as role models of faith and service to the students with activities such as Faith Formation, Retreats, Prayer, Mass, sacraments and other spiritual experiences.

Each year our classrooms choose projects that impact our local, regional, and international communities; examples include, but are not limited to Wounded Warrior Project, Caring Friends, Prayer Partners, Rice Bowl, Amani, and the American Cancer Society among others.

Our students and families participate in parish activities, often providing service to help with Vacation Bible School, babysitting for Race Day

events, altar serving for funerals and weddings and cantoring at liturgies.

"What our children believe is just as important as what they know." NCEA

Notable Achievements and Areas of Improvement

Describe the school's notable achievements and areas of improvement in the last three years. Additionally, describe areas for improvement that the school is striving to achieve in the next three years.

Executive Summary: Part 3 - Areas of Notable Achievement and Areas of Improvement

For more than sixty years, St. Leo Parish School has educated thousands of young people in their faith, and in the skills they need to function in secular society. In 2005, St. Leo was the first Catholic school in the Charlotte diocese to be awarded the status of Blue Ribbon School by the National U.S. Department of Education, an annual recognition of academic excellence granted to only 50 non-public schools.

In 2006 The National Association of Boards, Commissions and Councils of Catholic Education of the NCEA honored St. Leo School with the 2006 outstanding Board Award in recognition of outstanding contributions to Catholic Education for the development of its Conflict Resolution policy that remains in effect today.

In 2013 "Today's Catholic Teacher" magazine recognized St. Leo as A School of Innovation Awardee in curriculum and instruction. St. Leo is focused on a rigorous academic curriculum that includes three foreign languages. Students in grades K-8 learn Spanish, French and Mandarin Chinese. It is this broad foreign language offering and the many creative ways the languages and cultures are incorporated into the curriculum that earned St. Leo this national innovation award. The well-rounded foreign culture and language classes pray and sing in all three languages, learn to speak, read and write all three languages and celebrate holidays from all three cultures as well. Also faculty and students use technology tools to assist students in collaboration and understanding of the variety of opportunities in the world. The celebration of cultural diversity brings hope for peaceful solutions to the world's concerns regarding the environment, respect for individual freedom, and nurturing of creativity.

In the past five years SLS student accomplishments include National Geographic Bee State representative, Regional Mathcounts recognition, Scholastic Achievement State Awards, Knights of Columbus writing, poster and essay awards and Young Authors State winners.

STRENGTHS: Self-Assessment results as well as stakeholder perception surveys showed recognition of a rigorous academic program with high expectations and excellent quality. Additionally a strong focus on student success and use of support services to ensure success is a strength.

Notable Curriculum initiatives follow:

"Read Naturally™" is a research-based program designed to build oral reading fluency, which is highly correlated with success in reading comprehension. This is a program we use during the school year to meet the needs of students for building fluency and increasing comprehension.

Thanks to generous grants from the Diocese of Charlotte and St. Leo the Great Parish, St. Leo Parish School hosts summer reading enrichment sessions based on the Read Naturally™ Read Live program. In the past summer, three St. Leo's teachers helped 48 students from the local community to improve their fluency and reading comprehension.

This growing program is in its 10th summer, with many students returning year after year, but with many new faces as well. "It's been a busy, but very exciting summer for us," said Mrs. Hurley. "We call ourselves the United Nations, because we have children and families who hail from all parts of the globe, including Peru, Columbia, Ecuador, Cuba, Mexico, and Burma. Several students have made more than a year's worth of progress in reading fluency in just the first two weeks of sessions, and all of them have begun attending double sessions to push those gains even further. And it's wonderfully fulfilling for us as well. After the children attended several sessions, some of their

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mothers asked if they could also use the program to improve their English language skills. It didn't take more than a split second for us to answer "Yes!"

"Readers Club" like Read Naturally is an early morning program. It is an Orton-Gillingham Multi-sensory Education program provided for students in Learning Support (Kindergarten to 3rd grade) who are referred by their teachers or recommended by the medical community as a result of testing. The Learning Support Teacher received comprehensive training and certification to teach this method. As defined by Orton-Gillingham, "this methodology utilizes phonetics and emphasizes visual, auditory and kinesthetic learning styles. Instruction begins by focusing on the structure of language and gradually moves towards reading. The program provides students with immediate feedback and a predictable sequence that integrates reading, writing, and spelling."

"Learning Support throughout the school - Good Shepherds"

To ensure integration of Catholicity in our curriculum activities and daily actions teachers are participating in a PLC this year. The PLC uses Scriptures focused on the Good Shepherd. The PLCs include prayer, Scripture, Reflection and Application to learning differences in the workplace/classroom. Teachers meet with the Learning Support Teacher and Guidance Director to review accommodations and recommendations for each learning support student. Learning support is available for students in kindergarten through 8th grade who have been tested or identified as having an academic need for small group or individual instruction. Students are referred to the Learning Support Program by their teachers for help in reading or mathematics. Some students receive accommodations in testing. Lesson plans and accommodations are coordinated with the student's classroom teacher. Where there are possible learning disabilities, Learning Support and the Guidance Department work together to facilitate testing with the psychologist.

North Carolina State Catholic Schools Writing Assessment: Students in 4th and 7th grades are assessed each year in March on their writing skills. The 4th grade students are assessed in either narrative or opinion writing. The 7th grade students are assessed in expository/persuasive writing. The rubrics, prompts, training, and scoring are administered by a committee comprised of 4th and 7th grade writing teachers in both the Charlotte and Raleigh dioceses under the supervision of the Superintendents and Assistant Superintendents of both dioceses.

The committees of 4th and 7th grades teachers meet three to four times a year to continue to improve the assessment. The committee works each year to review the rubric, create prompts for yearly assessment and to create prompts for the anchor papers for the next year. The committee trains teachers in the process of narrative, opinion, and expository writing. The committee invites teachers to correct the writing assessments each March. Teachers are trained to score. The writing papers receive a score and then sent around for a second read. The two scores are then averaged. This process, developed over ten years, is very effective in helping the students in both Charlotte and Raleigh Dioceses to become stronger writers. Teachers are now accountable for teaching writing to their students on all grade levels. The committee is expanding in 2015-16 to include Third Grade Teachers.

National Standardized Testing Results and Use of Data:

In the 2011-12 school year, the diocese of Charlotte Catholic Schools changed our standardized testing program from the IOWA Test of Basic Skills to the Pearson SAT-10, which our students take in the fall each year. The Pearson SAT-10 Total Battery Scores have remained relatively stable in all grades during the 2011-2014 cycle. However we do see Math Computation scores (problem solving), as consistently rising scores from third through 8th grade for the years represented by the SAT-10 data. This upward trend is particularly encouraging because math computation was considered one of our improvement goals at the time of our last 5-year accreditation study. At that time, we initiated a program of math fact drills (Holey cards) in our primary and intermediate grades which may explain some of the improvement; in Middle School math computation/problem solving continues to be stressed. A Middle School Mathcounts Team meets weekly and does well in the area competition.

Our Families, our Staff, our administration, our parish work together to ensure we are a strong Parish school model. We maintain a pattern

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of continuous improvement.

CHALLENGES/ Areas for Improvement: Stakeholder perception surveys showed recognition of specific areas for growth. The desire for continuous improvement in the next five years will include but is not limited to the following characteristics.

Professional development opportunities particularly in the area of ensuring maintenance of our strong Catholic Identity and maintaining our Catholic practices and traditions will be a part of our five year plan.

Financial challenges due to the rising cost of Catholic Education are a priority. Sacrifices are required to meet the needs of a diverse population and provisions to meet the technological needs for resources for teaching and learning is addressed in the next section of this report.

Student Voice - Students perception on the surveys indicated they needed more confirmation that each of their voices are heard and given equal recognition. Knowing this as we began the year the Pastor initiated a meeting with the Student Council after the installation ceremony to gather and share ideas. Students in the Middle School meet on Wednesday afternoon each week in small SIP groups(Student Inspiration Program). This allows students the opportunity and time to express ideas, concerns and opinions in an appropriate setting.

Additional Information

Provide any additional information you would like to share with the public and community that were not prompted in the previous sections.

Executive Summary Part 4: Day to Day and Future

Operational Vitality: Affordability for middle class families and families without resources is a challenge for parish schools. The cost of a Catholic Education is prohibitive for some families. 15 % of families currently enrolled receive financial assistance. The Parish Finance Council and School Board is exploring ways to ensure that tuition remain affordable. \$100,000 in financial assistance to needy families is distributed annually to sustain current enrollment. (This does not include parish subsidies).

These ideas to better serve the St. Leo School Community were requested and submitted to the Diocesan School Board in 2011 by the St. Leo School Board:

1. Catholic Schools are a ministry of the entire diocese. 2. All School Building Construction Costs are a responsibility that needs to be shared throughout the Catholic community, rather than being solely the burden of those attending the Catholic school. 3. Financial ways to optimize our purchasing power as diocesan schools need to be examined. 4. Specifically we should find a way to have system-wide site licensing whether MACS, or parish schools.

A diocesan endowment for Catholic Schools was part of a recent diocesan wide campaign. SLS needs a strong endowment to provide Catholic education for future generations. For several years a portion of the Annual Appeal has been designated for the endowment. The School Board has asked the PTO and Athletics organizations to designate 5% of each fundraiser to the endowment as well. The Student Council also gives a portion of their fundraising amounts to increase the endowment.

Information

The parish recently hired a Marketing Director to pursue grants; marketing, social media, and publicity. She is learning about the school and hopefully will help work with the school as well as the church/parish.

Locations of established schools and impact on their enrollment should receive strong consideration before allowing new ones to be built. Sustainability of schools with one of each grade like SLS depends on full enrollment. Before building new schools in the region, feasibility of expanding number of grades in current schools should be examined.

Technology Support: Rapid change in the opportunities for learning through internet devices is exciting. St. Leo Administration and Faculty have worked with the PTO, Catholic Schools Office, the Parish, and Teachers on site and throughout the diocese for Professional development sharing in order to ensure that practices are current regarding curriculum, devices and policies. Classrooms all have interactive projectors or boards. The Media Center and computer lab are effective in providing students guidance and development of research skills, keyboarding and ethical use of the internet. Currently we are examining policies regarding internet use. We are also developing a technology curriculum and analysis and 5 year purchase plan for technology infra-structure and devices, and policies throughout the campus. Faculty and Staff recognize a need for continuing professional development opportunities.

Curriculum Technology Integration: Teachers post syllabi on their webpage. Google docs are used by the faculty to assist integration and

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sharing across the curriculum. Middle School teachers use a common calendar on Edmodo to plan tests and projects. Communication with parents through Edline and Edmodo is currently used. We are investigating the use of a single system throughout the school from K-8 to assist parents and streamline the process of checking their child(ren)'s progress on-line.

Media Support: We have a completed Library Curriculum and Collection Analysis and 5-year Collection Development Proposal 2014-2019. (There is a link on the website.) Our students continue to be recognized in the Winston-Salem area for strong language arts and research skills.

Governance and Leadership: Survey results from Faculty, Parents and Students confirmed that St. Leo School has high expectations for students in all classes and shares student learning responsibilities with all stakeholders. The survey confirmed the governing body operates responsibly and effectively and does not interfere with day to day operation of our school. The school communicates effectively our goals and activities through various avenues - newsletter, email, handbook, website, bulletins, local print media and Annual Reports. SLS has great stakeholder involvement through PTO, Athletics, School Board and Student Council.

Student/Family Voice: In our mobile society the Administration and Staff recognize that the school plays the role of extended family. St. Leo Parish School welcomes all families to partnership in a Catholic environment. We recognize we are all immigrants on a journey. We know at the beginning of Catholic School history we were immigrant schools. We strive to continue to be a resourceful place of faith, where our students learn how to successfully encounter the world and make a difference.