

Designing our Future

**Visiting Team Report
For**

**Saint Michael the Archangel Catholic School
824 Wayne Avenue
Silver Spring MD 20910**

April 25-28, 2010

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Chair**

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Principal**

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**A Visiting Team
Appointed by:**

**The Middle States Association
Of Colleges and Schools
Commission on Elementary Schools**

The contents of this report represent the judgments of the members of the Visiting Team, as interpreted and written by the chair. They do not necessarily represent the opinion of the Commission on Elementary Schools or of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools

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INTRODUCTION TO THE REPORT

Saint Michael the Archangel Catholic School is located in Silver Spring, Maryland, and borders Washington, DC. This co-educational Catholic elementary school provides educational programs and services for a little over two hundred students in grades K through grade 8. The school was established in 1933 and this accreditation visit was a component of their third re-accreditation by the Middle States Commission on Elementary Schools. The school is part of the Archdiocese of Washington.

The Visiting Team wishes to acknowledge the support of Reverend Msgr. Eddie Tolentino, pastor of Saint Michael the Archangel Parish, and Mr. Charles Eames, principal of Saint Michael the Archangel Catholic School. The support of the pastor and principal has empowered the staff to prepare for the Visiting Team as part of the Middle States protocol for re-accreditation. The dedication of Jennifer Blaine and Paul Rybczyk, Steering Committee Chairs, to the Middle States protocol was exemplary in guiding Saint Michael's through the entire process.

The Visiting Team for this evaluation was excellent. The members, Judy Crossan, Rita Eassai, and Mary Jane McCormick, were dedicated, well informed, astute, and insightful. They worked diligently, but were always ready with a smile and good spirit to move the process along. Their generous sharing of expertise and unflagging energy during the long hours of the team visit were outstanding.

The mission of the Visiting Team is to assist the school as it strives to achieve coherence and excellence through continual school improvement. The team does not recommend specific ways in which the school should improve. Only the school can determine what is right for them. The job of the Visiting Team is to help Saint Michael the Archangel Catholic School by pointing the way for it to continue their cycle of school improvement. In that spirit, this report is submitted.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE VISIT

On March 31, 2010, a few weeks prior to the scheduled visit, the chair of the visiting team traveled to Saint Michael School in Silver Spring, Maryland. The chair was welcomed by and met with the principal, Charles Eames, toured the school, spoke with Jennifer Blaine and Paul Rybczyk, Steering Committee chairs, and was introduced to the staff members. At this time, the Chair observed the delightful, hard-working students.

During the afternoon of Sunday, April 25, 2010, the team and chair arrived at the hotel and held a meeting to develop an organizational plan for the visit. Then, the team walked the short distance to the school and was greeted by the principal and members of the faculty. After a tour of the entire facility, the team was welcomed, and the purposes of the visit were presented. The principal delivered an informative Power Point presentation and gave team members the opportunity to learn about the school's philosophy and community. Next, the team was treated to a delicious dinner that was attended by the pastor, associate pastor, staff members, faculty, and parents. This gave the team the opportunity to socialize with members of the school community while gaining an informal understanding about St. Michael's. The Visiting Team then convened a meeting to discuss the Self-Study, review the schedule of the proceedings, go over team assignments, and establish a format for writing the final report.

The activities on second day included interviews with parents, the pastor, teachers, and staff members. The team observed the arrival and dismissal of students, their classes, and their lunch and recess. On the third day, the team again spent time in classrooms observing the students, talked with staff members, interviewed the students, met with the principal, and talked with the Steering Committee. The objective to visit each classroom and special teachers by a team member was not only met but exceeded. The three members of the visiting team used the three and one-half day visit to review written documents prepared by the school, its improvement goals and action plans. The team interacted with as many members of the school community as possible regarding their knowledge, understanding and support for the self-study and to gain greater insight into the school's ability to meet Middle States Standards. The team concluded that it had a full and rich experience leading to the following report and assessment. The team is appreciative of the openness and welcoming manner of every staff member who are deeply committed to this school program and their students.

On behalf of the entire team, the Chair would like to express our appreciation for the hospitality and gracious accommodations that were afforded to us. When we arrived at Saint Michael's, we had the benefit of an informative Power Point presentation about your school community and experienced an enlightening tour of your school. We enjoyed the congenial reception, good company, and delicious food you provided for us on Sunday. On Monday, we were greeted with a gift bag filled with goodies in our work room. Through all of the many pleasant and informative classroom visits and interviews, we have felt your very warm welcome. We are especially well fed and have had the pleasure of being part of the Saint Michael the Archangel Catholic School family for all too brief a time. In particular, we all enjoyed your delightful and very polite students. We heard them read, watched them tackle math problems, observed their

games in gym class, and saw their interest in computers. Their enthusiastic faces and words of praise indicate their very high regard for their principal, teachers, and school activities. They are happy and well adjusted, and told us about their helpful and caring teachers. One of their wishes was for us to recommend building a gym. I offer special thanks to your principal, Charles Eames, and Steering Committee chairs, Jennifer Blaine and Paul Rybczyk, for their skilled, enthusiastic leadership and positive direction through which this visit was made possible. Finally, I would like to recognize all of the time, talent, and energy that every teacher put into the self-study and team visit in addition to fulfilling your regular duties as educators. Each one of you deserves a lot of credit for this undertaking. My hope is that you have found it a truly worthwhile experience—one that will carry you through the twenty first century.

The team is especially appreciative of the hospitality, support and assistance provided by the Principal, Mr. Eames. Because of his personal commitment to the team and the accreditation process this visit was very successful. The Chair also wishes to thank the three Catholic Elementary School Teachers, Judy Crossan, Rita Eassai, and Mary Jane McCormick, who served on this team. Their experience and insight regarding Catholic education made this a significant visit.

Leadership at Saint Michael's is enthusiastic and accomplished; the faculty is knowledgeable, cohesive, and dedicated. The future of this school can be exceptional. The visiting team leaves with the hope that our insights and recommendations coupled with your own will help the school recognize and address major issues. Through implementation of the Strategic Plan, Saint Michael the Archangel Catholic School enters an exciting period of growth and development in this new century. The work of the visiting team is now concluded. We wish you well. May God continue to bless you. Thank you for your hospitality.

MISSION AND BELIEFS STUDY

OBSERVATIONS

The teachings of Christ are at the heart of Saint Michael the Archangel Catholic School where supportive, respectful relationships among all members of the school community are in evidence. In the words of their mission statement, “Dedicated to meeting the unique educational needs of our diverse student population, we partner with our students’ families and Saint Michael Parish to meet these common goals: the most important of which is to assist each student in the journey to God.” The complete mission statement is published throughout the school and in school publications. The beliefs of the school begin with “We believe that all students have the right to a physically and emotionally safe and secure environment that is conducive to learning.” The faculty and administration create this safe, learning environment that is also evidenced by student relationships. The students are the precious jewels of the school—talented, motivated, respectful, and filled with God’s grace. The faculty and administration demonstrate the essence of their mission and belief statements of their philosophy from the beginning to the conclusion of the school day. Within the classrooms, the faculty models the teachings of Christ through their words and actions and integrates Catholic teachings and values into the subject matter. The parents voice a strong sense of school family and teamwork with the teachers of Saint Michael’s. When the students graduate from Saint Michael School, they carry with them faith and learning that reflect the good news of Jesus. They have what they need to be happy and successful in this life and through eternity.

COMMENDATIONS

The Team Commends:

The administration and faculty for living the Christian faith and creating a peaceful atmosphere, conducive to the education of the whole child and the diverse student population.

The pastor for his deep commitment to Saint Michael School and his belief that every child is teachable and entitled to a Catholic education.

The pastor, administration, faculty, and students for living out the Catholic faith by celebrating weekly Mass and the sacrament of reconciliation as a faith community.

The administration, faculty, students, and parents for bringing their philosophy to life through their interactions and relationships.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Team Recommends:

That the faculty continues to engage in ongoing professional development in order to model life-long learning for their students and to enhance the teaching and learning of the school.

That the administration and faculty periodically assess the implementation of the philosophy to ensure that the school continues to fulfill its mission.

STANDARD: PHILOSOPHY/MISSION

The school has a clearly written and actively implemented statement of philosophy/mission that conveys the general and specific purposes of its educational program, expresses expectations for quality, and serves as the basis for daily operational and instructional decision making as well as long-range planning. Stakeholders give input into the development of the school's philosophy/mission and understand and accept it. This document is aligned with the community served and is reviewed periodically by stakeholder representatives.

The standard is met.

COMMUNITY STUDY

OBSERVATIONS

The school community of Saint Michael's is unique. Many parents are alumni of Saint Michael School and are eager and happy to have their children attend this school. Most of the families do not live in the immediate area of Saint Michael's, yet still have a deep desire for their children to attend. In conjunction with the classroom teachers, they are also wholeheartedly seeking improvements throughout the curriculum for their children. Due to the unique location of this school, Saint Michael's has an opportunity to tap into the numerous businesses and companies within the area to assist in its growth process. During an interview session with the students, one eighth grade boy conveyed his sense of community by stating that he was able to identify every student in Saint Michael School by name. When asked what is the one thing the students will take with them upon graduating from Saint Michael's, both eighth grade students expressed how they will remember their faith foundation, spirit of love and family and enriched academic growth, which clearly incorporates the mission statement of the school.

COMMENDATIONS

The Team Commends:

The parents of Saint Michael School for their dedication to the continuation and success of the school and for their encouragement of the development and expansion of the school.

The principal for his commitment to the growth of the school by making himself accessible on the weekends for families of potential incoming students and for his constant effort to "market" the school when he speaks at Mass on the weekends.

The team commends the pastor for his passionate commitment in Catholic education and especially for the continued existence, growth and development of Saint Michael the Archangel School.

The team commends the celebration and affirmation of the cultural diversity of the students and their families.

The team commends Saint Michael School for recognizing the importance of a school advisory board and its valuable role in the future progress of the school.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Team Recommends:

That the administration, faculty, staff, parents, and parish continue to vigorously pursue recruitment of students through the comprehensive marketing plan that targets Saint Michael Parish, other parishes, and families in the area through activities, such as regular open houses and showcases to promote awareness of the school as a Catholic learning community of excellence.

That the school utilizes businesses within the area to help supplement their need for goods and / or services to the school.

That Saint Michael School develops lines of communication in which the administration, faculty, and parents have an opportunity to communicate thoughts and ideas, schedules and updates on a regular basis.

That the school utilizes a variety of traditional and electronic communication venues, such as e-mail, websites, a public announcement system, and a centrally located informational bulletin board, because communication is an essential aspect of any school.

STUDENT SERVICES/ACTIVITIES STUDY

OBSERVATIONS

The student services at Saint Michael School incorporate academic development and support for students of varying, social, and/or emotional needs and abilities. The students are able to utilize play areas on the school property such as a basketball court, small playground, and an adjacent grass field during lunch, recess and gym periods. At present, the school does not provide a means of transporting students; provide a hot lunch program, or formal music instruction. An art program has been established and classes are held by an art instructor three days a week. The area of guidance is approached from a religious perspective and the school offers counseling from a licensed social worker who is contracted through the Christ Child Society and is available to the students two days a week. Saint Michael's also provides remedial instruction in the subject areas of mathematics and language arts, through a Title I educator and a part-time resource room instructor. Teachers whose students receive Title I services are also offered professional development in various subject areas.

Socially, the students are offered to join school oriented activities such as the youth choir, track team, basketball, and cheerleading squad. Students actively participate in Student Council and represent the student body to offer ideas, suggestions and concerns of the student population. Saint Michael School offers a before and after school program to all students in kindergarten through eighth grade. Students also participate in social activities such as school dances, cupcake sales, raffles, and various other fund raising activities.

COMMENDATIONS

The Team Commends:

The faculty and staff for their diligence in providing a safe, nurturing and loving environment with the primary concern being the educational, spiritual and emotional development of every child in all aspects of the school.

Saint Michael School for the great diversity and multicultural nature that is displayed throughout the building through artistic displays, projects, and multicultural decorations, evidence of the spirit of the students who attend.

The administration, faculty, and support staff of Saint Michael's for striving to educate the "whole" child in the areas of technology, art and student choir; as well as encouraging the students' leadership abilities in Student Council and student patrols and their need for social activities such as basketball, cheerleading and track.

The school community for addressing the needs of the working parents by providing the before and after care program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Team Recommends:

That the faculty and staff continue to further develop activities that incorporate student participation and promote a greater self worth among the students, such as a soccer team, chess club and reinstatement of the Peer Mediation Team.

That the school investigates possibilities to utilize local businesses to pursue the idea of a consistent, healthy, hot lunch program for all students.

That the middle school teachers, in conjunction with the school counselor, establish a program that offers suggestions for future career choices, such as a Career Day.

That the faculty utilizes the opportunity to aggressively seek professional development and courses offered through Title I and Montgomery County to continually meet the demands of a constantly changing educational environment.

STANDARDS: STUDENT SERVICES/ACTIVITIES

The school implements written policies and procedures, in partnership with families and the community, that provide all students with, or refer them to, services that are age- and developmentally appropriate to optimize opportunities for life-long success. Student services are systematic and integral to the educational program. They are provided by qualified personnel, sufficiently financed, periodically evaluated and philosophy/mission appropriate.

The school provides access to non-discriminatory student activities that are age- and developmentally appropriate to supplement the educational program. A balance of academic, social, co- or extra-curricular, and service activities is maintained. Student activities are selected to foster intellectual, cultural, and social growth as well as physical health and wellness. Student activities provide opportunities for student leadership and social interaction and encourage development of student interests. These activities are adequately financed, periodically reviewed by stakeholders, managed by school governance and leadership, and appropriate to the school's philosophy/mission.

The Student Services/Activities standards are met.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM STUDIES

LANGUAGE ARTS STUDY

OBSERVATIONS

The Language Arts Program at Saint Michael School is rooted with faith-based ideas that are integrated into the instruction through the literature that is read. Students are encouraged daily to write in journals, share their finished work, and take pride in their writing accomplishments. From sight word lists reinforced in the classroom of the primary grades, to reading circles in the intermediate grades, and the study of Mythology in the middle school, students are afforded an opportunity to develop a love of reading in its many forms. Through the use of literature connections, text-to-text, and text-to-readers in fourth grade, poetry memorization and recitation in eighth grade, grammar centers and grammar games in third grade, and the word wall in kindergarten, the students are challenged and enthusiastic for the subject. The language arts curriculum is aligned with the academic standards developed by the Archdiocese of Washington Catholic Schools Office. Use of technology has been introduced in both the third and fourth grade language Arts class with the utilization of the computer lab for class one day a week. Journal writing is also integrated into the religion program, allowing the students to express their faith and beliefs.

COMMENDATIONS

The Team Commends:

The faculty for the introduction of technology in third and fourth grade language arts curriculum.

The faculty for the students' achievement on the language arts composite of the Terra Nova Standardized Test.

The faculty for recognizing the need to incorporate journal writing into the religion curriculum to further the students' faith experience.

The faculty for innovative uses of poetry, grammar, word walls and connections to further enhance the curriculum.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Team Recommends:

That the administration and faculty direct efforts towards developing a variety of research based teaching strategies and assessments through professional development.

That the administration examines various strategies of scheduling in order to bring all three components of language arts together.

That the administration explores the greater use of technology for research, the writing process, and reestablishing a literary magazine in order to help showcase the effort and talents of the students.

SCIENCE STUDY

OBSERVATIONS

The science program at Saint Michael the Archangel School presents lessons in a positive manner with emphasis on a world designed and created by God. The science curriculum is aligned with the academic standards developed by the Archdiocese of Washington Catholic Schools Office. Textbooks that are utilized in instruction and reinforcement are current and follow Diocesan standards. The curriculum provides a well grounded knowledge of important facts, concepts, and relationships to the students in order to enhance a love of the subject. Students are encouraged to use critical thinking and problem solving skills throughout the scientific process as well as using social interaction skills for effective collaborative investigations. Through the development of a basic knowledge of how living things function and interact with one another and their environment and through the use of field trips and classroom animals used for instruction, the students gain a better understanding and appreciation of the world around them.

COMMENDATIONS

The Team Commends:

The faculty for use of everyday materials and drawing on student experiences to demonstrate scientific concepts.

The faculty and administration for implementation of an annual Science Fair to further interest in the subject along with a sense of personal achievement.

The faculty for providing opportunities for students to attend field trips relevant to the science standards.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Team Recommends:

That the administration and faculty investigate ways to develop a plan for a future science lab classroom or portable science lab carts to enhance the students' active learning through the scientific process.

That the faculty incorporates a greater use of technology, including text series resources.

That the administration considers the purchase of instructional materials and lab equipment for use in the classrooms.

MATHEMATICS STUDY

OBSERVATIONS

The math program follows the standards of the Archdiocese of Washington. The administration and faculty have recognized that the math Terra Nova Standardized Test scores have dropped and that pacing in math needed attention. The team observed that students were showing an improvement and that progress was being made. In kindergarten, the students were solving math families and grade eight students are striving to become students of algebra. Grade six students worked well on congruent figures. Grade seven students are working on pre-algebra skills. Grade two worked hard telling time. The school has purchased up-to-date text and workbooks. In the second grade classroom, there is an ample supply of manipulatives that are shared by other grades.

COMMENDATIONS

The Team Commends:

The faculty and administration for recognizing the need to provide an advanced math curriculum from kindergarten through eighth grade.

The faculty for addressing the learning styles of the students by utilizing the resource room in grades one to five.

The administration and faculty for the availability of new texts and workbooks utilized by the students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Team Recommends:

That the faculty and administration incorporate tools, such as standard and scientific calculators, and computers in math and science classes.

That the administration provides funds for math manipulatives for grades that don't have them.

That the administration establishes the position of a math coordinator and increase the professional development hours of the faculty.

STANDARDS: EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND ASSESSMENT

The educational program consists of a carefully planned and well-executed curriculum that includes appropriate academic standards, solid pedagogy, and assessment, all based on research and best practices. The educational program is aligned with the school's mission, approved by the governance, sufficiently financed, and periodically reviewed by stakeholders. It is developed to address the needs of all students and is designed to foster and challenge student learners at all levels. Effective policies and procedures are in place, along with the instructional materials, technology, and equipment that are appropriate, functional, and well maintained. Written curriculum guides are current, functional, available, and in use. They define scope and sequence of the educational program as well as program objectives and reflect sound approaches to teaching and learning.

The school systematically collects and rigorously analyzes quantifiable and observable evidence of individual learning and growth from multiple valid and reliable sources. Evidence of student learning is used to evaluate and improve curriculum effectiveness, instructional practices, professional development, and support services. Progress in student learning and performance is expected and is accurately, clearly, and systematically reported to the school community.

The Educational and Assessment standards are met.

RELIGIOUS PROGRAM STUDY

OBSERVATIONS

The religious community of Saint Michael the Archangel school is one that strives to bring the mission of Christ to every child. The pastor, along with the principal, faculty and staff, all share in this vital goal of having a school that centers on this mission. At the start of every school day, the children, led by their principal, begin their day praising God by praying the “Our Father” as a whole school. This communal prayer seems to further instill the sense of community and belonging. A sense of “coming home” was expressed by several parents whose children attend St. Michaels. There is an obvious God-centered connection among the students that is evident in every aspect of the school. The student population is respectful and genuinely concerned about one another. They are actively engaged in their faith development and spiritual growth by celebrating the Holy Eucharist and the sacrament of Reconciliation on a weekly basis, and having a Director of Religious Education and Deacon who incorporate the importance of Religious values and beliefs in weekly classes for the 7th and 8th grade students.

COMMENDATIONS

The Team Commends:

The pastor of Saint Michael’s, along with the administration, faculty, and staff for their commitment to bringing the message of Christ and creating a God-centered learning environment for the students.

The pastor for offering the sacrament of Reconciliation to the students on a weekly basis and for involving the students in the celebration of the liturgy during weekly Mass.

The faculty for integrating the students’ diverse cultures throughout the curriculum and instilling a deep sense of spirituality, love and oneness among the student body.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Team Recommends:

That the school increases the emphasis of the faith sharing for the students in the intermediate and upper school grades.

That the school engages the students in learning and living the Catholic Social teachings of the church.

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION STUDIES

OBSERVATIONS

The school is self contained in grades kindergarten to three, has a team approach in grades four and five, and is departmentalized in grades six to eight and throughout the entire school in specialized subjects. The leadership style of St. Michael's is to encourage each child to achieve academic excellence. The pastor wants the children to have fun, but they need to work hard, study hard, play hard, and pray hard. The principal is responsible for promoting the school and is involved in staff, parish council, and finance committee meetings. He and the pastor meet weekly and has an agenda about school matters.

The leadership team at Saint Michael School consists of the pastor, principal, primary grade dean, and middle school dean. The pastor and associate pastor are a visible presence in the school through the sacramental and teaching life of the school. The pastor wants the children to be happy and feels that they have the right to a Catholic education. The principal is responsible for promoting the school and is involved in staff, parish council, and finance committee meetings. The principal, with experience in education, recruitment, and development, has brought his dedication and expertise to the school through his passion about Catholic education and his achievement of enrollment increase and financial solvency. The faculty's role in leadership centers on leading their students to be respectful and active members of the school community, moderating clubs, consulting with administration, delivering the curriculum, and communicating with the parents. Professional development opportunities have been offered to the faculty in the past.

COMMENDATIONS

The Team Commends:

The pastor for his strong interest, dedication, and love for Saint Michael School in particular and all Catholic education in general.

The principal as a very enthusiastic and highly motivated administrator for bringing hope to Saint Michael the Archangel School through his focus on Catholic identity, academic excellence, marketing, development for the school, and making the school a vital part of the community.

The administration for recognizing the need for developing the leadership of the faculty by appointing two faculty members as dean of the primary grades and dean of the middle school with the responsibility and authority for academic, organizational, and disciplinary issues.

The school for recognizing the need for professional development in differentiated instruction and assessment in order to improve the educational experience for every student.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Team Recommends:

That leadership opportunities be extended to the faculty in the roles of curriculum coordinators who would be responsible for vertical curriculum articulation, implementation of best practices, research-based teaching strategies, and professional development in their areas.

That the administration and faculty collaborate on the development of written job descriptions, especially for the two deans.

That the administration provides opportunities for teachers to explore, observe, and implement a variety of research-based teaching strategies and establishes a high level of expectations for the faculty in their professional development and in their professional and catechetical credentials.

That the administration and faculty continue to implement the middle school model through the use of a variety concepts, such as an honors curriculum, separate uniforms, leadership in daily prayer, and mentoring by the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students of the kindergarten, first, and second grade students.

STANDARD: GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

The school is chartered, licensed, or authorized by a state, nation, or authority that operates in the public interest. The governance and leadership ensure the integrity, effectiveness, and reputation of the school through the establishment of policy, provision of resources, and assurance of a quality educational program. The governance and leadership act ethically and consistently to assure an atmosphere of mutual respect and purposeful effort on behalf of students and their learning. School leaders foster a productive environment for teaching and learning, timely and open communication with stakeholders, and the vision necessary for day-to-day operations and long-term planning.

The standard is met.

STANDARD: SCHOOL CLIMATE AND ORGANIZATION

The school's organizational structure and climate facilitate achievement of its core values as expressed in the philosophy/mission. The school culture supports successful implementation of age- and developmentally appropriate educational programs and services. Roles, responsibilities, expectations, and reporting relationships are clearly defined. Administrative, instructional, and support staff are qualified, competent, and sufficient in number to effectively provide quality educational experiences. The school

regularly conducts staff performance appraisals and offers professional development opportunities informed by its philosophy/mission. Relationships among the staff and leadership are collegial and collaborative.

The standard is met.

LEARNING MEDIA SERVICES AND TECHNOLOGY STUDY

OBSERVATIONS

Saint Michael School has a computer lab that houses 34 computers with flat screen monitors, all with internet capability. The instruction of technology is offered through a part-time educator who is present two days a week. On days there is no scheduled computer instruction, this room remains unavailable to faculty and students. Several classrooms are equipped with two computers that the children utilize to complete small group instruction and remedial work in either Mathematics or Language Arts. Other technological equipment can be found throughout the classrooms such as a TV/DVD/ or VCR. In addition to these items the school possesses one laser printer, one LCD projector and one video camera and are available when requested. Saint Michael's is currently directing efforts to reopen their school library, by late spring of 2010. A part-time librarian has been hired and is currently in the process of organizing and cataloging the library materials, books and inventory. Each classroom is equipped with an extensive offering of trade books for student use.

COMMENDATIONS

The Team Commends:

The principal and administration for providing a computer lab and library.

The faculty for recognizing the need for integrating and implementing the use of the technology component which is derived from their classroom texts by incorporating online chapter reviews, activities and reinforcing skills within the classroom setting.

The principal for his tireless efforts in securing new technology equipment through grants, local business and benefactors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Team Recommends:

That St. Michael's intensify efforts to expand the use of technology in every classroom and to increase skills training in the use of technology resources and equipment for all faculty and students.

That the administration and faculty implement the use of technology to effectively communicate

with one another and school families.

That the administration investigates ways to coordinate scheduling and utilization of the computer lab on a daily basis.

STANDARD: LEARNING MEDIA SERVICES AND TECHNOLOGY

Information resources, materials and technology are accessible and of adequate scope, quantity, and quality to facilitate the school's pursuit of its total educational program. These resources encourage all students and staff to broaden and extend their knowledge and skills. Access to appropriate information resources and technology is provided for students and staff. Appropriate instruction is offered to develop student and staff inquiry, research, and information literacy skills. Information technology equipment is functional and well maintained.

The Learning Media and Technology standard is met.

FACILITIES STUDY

OBSERVATIONS

Saint Michael the Archangel School was built in 1933. Renovations have been made over the years. The most recent renovations were in 2006 to create an art room and in 2007 to create additional office space that is now used as a recruitment room. The classrooms are large and well-lit. The décor in the classrooms is varied according to grade level. In the classrooms there is an emphasis on Catholic identity and additional decorations and displays. The school employs full maintenance staff under the direction of associate pastor. The staff is responsible for cleanliness and repairs. The school has emergency safety procedures in place. The school utilizes the basement for before and after care, lunch program, prayer corners, gym classes, after care, lunch program, art room, and faculty room. The school provides for arrival and departure procedures. Eighth grade students serve as patrols, and a faculty member is present. The school has an effective system to control access to the school by visitor. The school library is used for faculty, team, meetings, and parent meetings.

COMMENDATIONS

The Team Commends:

The pastor and principal for having a vision for the future of the school that includes expansion and plans for additional facilities.

The administration for having rooms available for parish meetings and activities.

The leadership of grade eight for organizing a safety patrol and playground patrol.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Team Recommends:

That the faculty reviews and strengthens the safety of the bathroom procedures, the security procedures for entrance into the school building, the arrival and dismissal procedures, and the role of the safety patrol.

That the administration and faculty have first aide kits and emergency plans visible in all

classrooms, lab, library, and the cafeteria and are CPR certified and trained in proper first aide procedures.

That the faculty practices more orderly fire drills for the safety of faculty and students and carry emergency information with them.

STANDARD: FACILITIES

School facilities are safe, clean, and well maintained. The physical environment supports delivery of the educational program/services as well as optimal student development and achievement. Facilities are appropriate and adequate to implement the philosophy/mission of the school. They are regularly inspected for effective operation and meet all applicable laws including health and safety code requirements.

The Facilities standard is met.

STANDARD: HEALTH AND SAFETY

A safe and healthy environment for teaching and learning is provided. Both preventive and emergency health and safety procedures are clear and well documented. The school environment is productive and orderly.

The Health and Safety standard is met.

FINANCES STUDY

OBSERVATIONS

The School of Saint Michael the Archangel has in recent years undergone many financial difficulties. With declining enrollment and costs rising there has been a significant deficit over the last three years. Through subsidies from the Parish of Saint Michaels, fundraising, and grants the school has been able to lower their debt significantly and looks toward operating in the black during the 2010-2011 academic year. The Archdiocese of Washington Office of Catholic Schools has provided grant funds for the school. The before and after school programs provide additional income along with continued income from collecting past due tuition. Through the Juan Diego Fund, Hispanic students can receive financial aid as well as The Archangel Fund which, through the faculty, contributed \$14,000 in 2009-2010 toward financial aid. With the projected enrollment over the next five years declining the administration and Pastor have aggressively increased marketing, development and recruitment procedures. An ongoing effort is in place to seek financial and other resources from neighboring businesses and institutions. Tuition is overseen by a school business manager while all other financial affairs are under the parish business manager. With the thought being that no child should be denied a Catholic School education the administration, parents and Pastor are continuously seeking ways to attain additional funds for grants and scholarships for the children of Saint Michael's.

COMMENDATIONS

The Team Commends:

The pastor and principal for their passion towards attaining school solvency through aggressive fundraising, marketing, and development.

The faculty for contributing to the Archangel fund to further educate those children in need and the families for their support in fundraising activities.

The parishioners and various community organizations for their continued dedication and support to Saint Michaels.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Team Recommends:

That the administration and faculty continue to increase enrollment that exceeds projections to add to the school income.

That the administration continues to seek financial support from neighboring businesses and institutions for student aid.

That the administration and faculty continue to seek grants for programs, professional development and other educational tools and technology.

STANDARD: FINANCES

Financial resources are sufficient to provide the educational opportunities defined in the school's philosophy/mission. The business practices of the school are ethical. These practices promote confidence in the school's ability to manage fiscal and material resources in a responsible manner and follow prescribed budgeting and accounting principles. The majority of resources rose for school purposes are dedicated to the school's operations.

The standard is met.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING STUDY

OBSERVATIONS

A Strategic Plan, developed by the whole school community, can have a positive impact throughout Saint Michael the Archangel Catholic School.

The strategic goals developed by the Steering Committee and presented in the self-study include:

1. Revitalizing the Catholic identity, academic excellence, enrollment, and financial strength of Saint Michael School by 2012.
2. Raising the students' Terra Nova Mathematics scores to the 60th percentile by 2012.

COMMENDATIONS

The Team Commends:

The faculty and administration for a strategic plan that is well thought out and broad based with specific objectives, adequate resources, and monitoring of results.

The faculty and administration for their development of a strategic goal for revitalization of Catholic identity and academic excellence.

The faculty and administration for developing a goal of high achievement in math through pacing, best practices, increased instructional time, curricular connections, and professional development.

The faculty and administration for recognition of the need for professional development in attaining the goal of improving math achievement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Team Recommends:

That the faculty and administration examine ways to enrich a classics-oriented education with technology to provide virtual experiences, research opportunities, and skills that will afford the students a twenty-first century, classics-oriented education.

That the administration evaluates the Catholic identity of the school through a variety of standards.

That the faculty engages in professional development that will enable them to implement the academic excellence called for in the strategic plan.

That the administration acquires and the faculty utilizes interactive technology, such as Smart technology, to optimize math instructional methods.

STANDARD: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

The school uses a collaborative process to develop and implement a written strategic or long-range plan to improve its educational program and services. Plans are aligned with the school's philosophy/mission and its operational plans, and are focused on continuous improvement of student performance, staff professional and organizational growth.

The standard of School Improvement Planning is met.

SUMMARY AND CLOSURE

The members of the Middle States Visiting Team wish to thank this school community for your warm welcome, support and the hospitality you offered us during our visit. We found that each of you were open and readily responded to our questions and requests for suggestions for improvement. We were impressed that your love and support of this school was apparent in all of our meetings with you. Your children are very special and it was a pleasure meeting and talking with many of them. A special thanks needs to be given to your principal, Mr. Eames, who supported the team in his planning and responsiveness to our every need and request. In every aspect of the operation of the school his positive influence was apparent.

We enjoyed the welcoming program and our first day here. Your staff, parents and community members including your pastor, Msgr. Tolentino, provided us with information and insights regarding the strong support given by everyone to Saint Michael the Archangel Catholic School. The team was especially impressed with the support of the school provided by Msgr. Tolentino.

Accreditation is a process, rather than an end when it is officially granted by the Middle States Commission on Elementary Schools. Accreditation starts first with the requirement you look closely at yourselves in relation to the twelve Middle States Standards and your philosophy and mission. From any discrepancies that become apparent plans for improvement are developed. The next phase of the process is one you have undergone with our visit. Our major focus was to verify that you had done an effective job in identifying the steps that had to be taken for your school to both meet standards and identify plans to continue to improve. When accreditation is granted your job is then to undertake the steps that need to be taken for you to continue to improve over the period accreditation is granted.

The Visiting Team finds that you have done a very effective job of developing a self-study that identifies your strengths and areas of needed improvement. We also find that you have met all of the Middle Stated Standards for accreditation including the identification of areas where improvement was needed as well as the development of improvement strategies and plans. It is in this area that continued staff and community discussion should be undertaken to add to and refine your focus for improvement. One of the major challenges this school faces is in the area of increasing the school's enrollment. In this regard, the Visiting Team feels that this school is one of the best kept secrets in the communities you serve. With an articulated plan to effectively get the word out about the strengths and benefits of this school's programs it will be easier to

adequately address enrollment issues.

One of the strengths of the accreditation process is that it invites all members of a school community to participate at all levels of this process. In addressing the issue of enrollment, this is an area that needs the commitment of everyone who knows and loves this school, and requires them to become involved. All members of this school community need to be invited to `become part of the development of ideas and strategies as well as active participants in carrying out improvement plans.

This school has much to offer the children in the larger city community. Supportive facilities, a dedicated and informed staff, passionate school leadership, a challenging curriculum and the strong backing of the pastor are only a few of the apparent strengths of this school. In addition, the experimentation with offering a foreign language experience to elementary school children has the promise of becoming a unique characteristic that will draw the attention of prospective parents who want a quality educational and religious experience for their children.

The accreditation process requires a mid-point visit to this school to see if improvement plans are being implemented. Hopefully one of the members of this Visiting Team will be assigned this responsibility. It is the hope of this author, and fellow team members that when the mid-point visit is conducted, it will be a time of celebration—a time when the school is recognized for making substantial progress in achieving its plans for improvement, and a time when it is better recognized in this community for offering a quality educational and religious experience. Good luck and God bless you. Now is the time to continue the journey of improvement with enthusiasm, confidence, and a clear direction.

Marian Hobbie, Ph.D.
Chair

VISITING TEAM SCHEDULE

Sunday, April 25, 2010

- 3:30 pm Introductory and organizational meeting with Visiting Team, at hotel
- 4:45 pm Tour of School by Visiting Team
- 5:30 pm Presentation of philosophy and community with Visiting Team and faculty
- 6:00 pm Dinner reception at School with Pastor, Staff, Faculty, and Parents
- 7:30 pm Team work session

Monday, April 26, 2010

- 8:00 am Parents interview
- 8:45 am Classroom observations and interviews begin
- 2:00 pm Interview Msgr. Tolentino, Pastor
- 4:00 pm Individual work session
- 7:30 p.m. Team work session

Tuesday, April 27, 2010

- 8:15 am Continue classroom observations and interviews
- 9:15 am Interview Students in grades 1 to 4
- 10:15 am Interview students in grades 5 to 8
- 12:00pm Observation of lunch and recess
- 1:30 pm Meeting with Charles Eames, Principal
- 3:15 pm Steering Committee interview
- 4:00 pm Individual work session
- 7:30 pm Team work session

Wednesday, April 28, 2010

- 8:00 am Presentation of Oral Report to Visiting Team

10:30 am Classroom visits
11:00 am Share major oral report recommendations with Principal
12:15 pm Oral report to staff and community representatives

VISITING TEAM ROSTER

Saint Michael the Archangel Catholic School April 25-28, 2010 Designing Our Future

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Maintaining the Momentum - Annual Review, Mid-Point Visit

When the Middle States Association accredits an educational institution, it does so with the understanding that the school will live up to its commitment to make a good-faith effort of implementing its action plan. It is not acceptable to place the plan on the shelf and forget about it until the next Middle States Visit.

Many experienced educators have found that the self-study process, during which the mission and beliefs, community needs, and the school's operations and programs were reviewed, is the easier part of the continuous improvement process. The hard work comes after the action plan has been developed and the visiting team has come and gone.

Because each school is unique, there is no single set of recommendations that can be made as to how the community can sustain its momentum for improvement over the entire seven-year accreditation cycle. Each school must find its own way to operationalize the improvement process to ensure that institutional growth becomes a part of the existing culture.

For a school to implement its plan, it must ensure that there is accountability for its implementation. Responsible persons or groups are assigned to oversee and monitor the implementation of the action plans. Changes may need to be made in the personnel or the school's organizational structure in order to provide the personnel, time and resources required for implementing the plans.

A major element of a culture of continuous improvement is regularly and formally reviewing the school's progress toward achieving their goals. The importance of maintaining an awareness of and commitment to the improvement plan cannot be understated. Schools that address the need for systematic, systemic and ongoing review of its action plans build a framework, which supports sustained energy for strategies aimed at school improvement.

As one of the requirements for maintaining accreditation, Middle States requires schools to conduct a formal progress review at least once annually. However, some schools have found that more frequent reviews are needed. Annual written reviews must be maintained at the local level.

When a school develops its action plans, it designates the persons or groups that are responsible for monitoring the school's progress. Usually, these individuals or groups conduct the annual

reviews. They are given the overall authority and responsibility for the plan implementation. These persons or groups can make decisions regarding the efficacy of the action plans, and revise the plans as needed to make progress toward achieving the school's goals.

Conducting Annual Reviews

The persons or groups responsible for monitoring the school's progress and conducting the annual reviews ought to:

Determine how many reviews are needed and when they should be scheduled.

Schedule reviews at times when important performance data from administering the assessments are received (student performance goals).

Ensure there is adequate time to review data, determine what the data means regarding the school's progress: receive reports regarding the implementation of the action plans: and determine what, if any, revisions need to be made to the action plans.

Determine how the school will celebrate the successes it has achieved.

It is recommended that those responsible establish a format for recording data and progress over the life of the plan. Simple tables or charts help to organize information and allow an at-a-glance view of progress over time. Graphic representations (bar graphs, pie charts and the like) are helpful in presenting annual review results to various members of the school community in a visual, easy-to-understand format.

Performance data (in relation to the school's student performance goal(s)) should indicate whether the implemented strategies and action steps are producing the desired changes in student performance. The annual review provides the opportunity to update the plan with newly identified strategies: to delete and delay strategies that have not proven effective or have yet to be implemented: and to indicate which strategies are completed or in process. Those responsible can document additional steps taken to address the goals, or develop a short narrative summary of progress since the last review.

Communicating with School Community Members

Those responsible for monitoring the school's progress must ensure a regular stream of communications with school community members regarding the plan implementation and the progress made. Community members need to be informed and involved. Their input may be sought and their ideas and energies incorporated into the school's improvement efforts. The school's mission and beliefs, goals and action plans ought to be communicated regularly. Some ideas for communicating include:

- At the beginning of the school year, each classroom and all public areas of the building should have a copy of the mission and belief statements prominently posted.
- Include a summary of progress toward the school's goals and key components of the action plans during open houses, conferences, and parent-teacher and board meetings. Vivid graphic representation is easily understood and can effectively highlight areas of progress.

- Continue to include a regular progress update on the agenda for faculty meetings.
- Create a page on the school’s Web site dedicated to the school’s plans for growth and improvement.
- Following each review, develop strategies to communicate the results to the faculty, students, parents, board/trustees, and community members.

Host an Onsite Mid-Point Review

In addition to the annual written reviews conducted and maintained by the school, the Middle States Association will appoint a Mid-Point Reviewer to conduct a review of the school’s implementation of its plans and progress toward achieving its goals. The Mid-Point Review Visit, typically one day, will occur during the third year of the seven-year accreditation cycle. When possible, the Reviewer will be someone from the original visiting team. Having spent time at the school, that individual will require less explanation of what the school has planned to improve. S/he should be able to readily see the progress that the school has made.

The school does not need to prepare special materials for the Review Visit. If the school has been implementing the plan, administering noted assessment methods, collecting the data, revising action plans as needed, and conducting written reviews at least annually, the records of these activities are all that is required by the Mid-Point Reviewer.

The Mid-Point Review may be viewed as an informal visit from a critical friend. This is an opportunity for the school to show evidence of the progress it has made to date in achieving its goals, and receive feedback about and encouragement for its efforts.

Sample Format - Narrative

Annual Review

School: _____

Address: _____

Principal/Director: _____

Date Review Completed: _____

List the school’s Action Plan goals:

Person(s) or groups responsible for conducting the annual review:

Explain the process used for conducting the annual review.

Describe the process used for collecting data, and information on the efforts to achieve each goal.

Description and analysis of the collected data and information related to each goal.

For each goal, identify strategies that were determined to be effective.

For each goal, identify strategies that were determined to be ineffective.

Identify changes that were made in the original action plans.

If goals from the original action plans have been achieved or abandoned, then new goals and action plans need to be developed. The MSCES format for the new goals and action plans shall be utilized.

Goal Statement:

Major Event and Timeline	Collateral Event and Timeline	Required Resources	Title or Positions of People Responsible for Implementation	Title or Positions of People Responsible for Assessing Progress	Date of Assessing Progress	Measurement Criteria

A similar chart must be developed for each goal.

Describe and analyze the current status of the school:

- **Demographic and/or school enrollment changes**
- **Major organizational changes**
- **Major curriculum changes**
- **Major changes that relate to any of the Middle States Standards for Accreditation**

MID-POINT REVIEW

School improvement requires continuing efforts by the entire school community. It is through these efforts that growth can best be assured. When a school develops their self-study, it leads to the development of an action plan for future growth. This action plan commits the school to continued growth and requires that the school regularly assess the efficacy of the plan. Through the continued internal assessment of the plan, the school develops a culture of planning and assures the public that the school continues to seek methods of growth.

Implementing a school action plan requires that schools continually revisit their original plan, assuring that it is a living part of school’s improvement efforts. The Middle States Commission on Elementary Schools (MSCES) requires that schools minimally review their action plan on a yearly basis and maintain a record of that review. The process for the annual internal review is described in a separate section of this document.

Purposes of the Mid-Point Review

The primary purpose of the Mid-Point Review is to permit an accredited school to share its successes with a representative (Mid-Point Reviewer) of the Commission. Additionally, the Mid-Point Review provides an excellent opportunity for the school to share its successes with the entire school community. Significant changes the school experienced after accreditation is an integral part of this review.

Schedule for the Mid-Point Review

The third year after accreditation, the school will prepare for a Mid-Point Visitor, who will go to the school, assess progress made to the original action plan and review the school’s future action plan. The review preparation should occur during the first semester of the third year, so the school can host a visit during the second semester. A Mid-Point Visit takes approximately four to five hours. A sample of a visit may look like this:

- 1 hour Meeting with the chief school administrator and/or others to discuss the school’s current status
- 1 hour Meeting with the individuals primarily responsible for developing the annual reports and the Mid-Point Progress Report

- ½ hour Meeting with a small group (2-3) of faculty
- ½ hour Meeting with school community representatives, including parents and/or others
- ½ hour Meeting with members of governing board or others of deemed by the school
- ½ hour Exit meeting with the chief school administrator and others as determined by the school

During these meetings, the Mid-Point Visitor will examine the current status of the school, discuss and assess goal progression of the original action plan and examine any future goals established by the school. Essentially, the Visitor will assess if the school is living up to the promises made in the original action plan, and measure if they have assured the school's continuing progress.

What to Send the Mid-Point Visitor

At least two weeks prior to the scheduled Visit, the school should send the following to the Visitor:

- A copy of the Visiting Team Report
- The letter of accreditation that accompanied the Certificate of Accreditation
- Completed Annual Reviews (there should be three) which includes a self-assessment of progress made on the action plan, clear planning for the future and the assessment of current school status
- Directions to the school
- A copy of the schedule for the Visit which has been mutually determined by the Visitor and the school. (The people with whom the Visitor will speak are to be included on this schedule)
- Any other information that the school believes will assist the Visitor and enhance the purpose of the Visit

The Mid-Point Review Visitor

When possible, it is preferred that the Visit be made by an original visiting team member. In doing so, the school has the opportunity to demonstrate growth to someone with familiarity with the school, making it easier to assess where the school was and how far it has progressed. MSCES will appoint the Mid-Point Visitor in November or December of the third year after accreditation and will inform the school of this appointment. If an original visiting team member is not available to make the Mid-Point Visit, another volunteer will be appointed. After the school receives notification of this appointment, a mutually convenient date for the Visit can be arranged. Schools and Mid-Point Visitors are encouraged to schedule this Visit between mid-January and mid-April.

Every effort will be made to appoint a Visitor who can accomplish the visit in one day, so that an overnight stay is not necessary. The Visitor's travel expenses are the school's responsibility.

The Mid-Point Report

Approximately 2-4 weeks after the Visit, the Mid-Point Visitor will send a completed Mid-Point

Report to the school and to the Middle States Commission on Elementary Schools. The Mid-Point Report will contain the following elements:

1. Introduction

An explanation of the Mid-Point Review Process within the Accreditation Cycle

2. Current Status of the School

This section will include any changes the school has experienced since the original accreditation. Comments may include, but are not limited to:

- Demographic and/or school enrollment changes
- Major organizational changes
- Major curriculum changes
- Major changes that relate to any of the Middle States Standards for Accreditation

3. Analysis of Progress Achieved on the Original Action Plan

The Mid-Point Visitor will comment on the progress made on each goal of the school's original action plan. These comments should clearly describe progress made and note changes to goals and/or action steps of the plan.

4. Analysis of Future Goals and Action Plans

If the school has developed new goals, or if it will continue to work toward the original goals, the Mid-Point Visitor will describe these goals and the continuing positive effects the school will realize as they are accomplished. It is essential that future goals and action plans are developed in sufficient detail to best assure positive results.

5. Concluding Comments

The Mid-Point Visitor will comment on significant strengths of the school's action plan and also describe any needs which have been identified.

Mid-Point Reports are typically 4-6 pages that clearly and succinctly assess improvements being made by the school.

All Mid-Point Reports will be assessed by volunteer "Readers" appointed by MSCES. If additional follow-up is required, the MSCES staff will provide appropriate direction to the school.

**Middle States Commission on Elementary Schools
Mid-Point Review Report**

School Name:

School Address:

School Head with Title:

School Phone:

School Fax:

Email:

Reviewer's Name:

Date of Mid-Point Visit:

Date of Expiration of Accreditation:

I. Introduction *(An explanation of the Mid-Point Review Process within the Accreditation Cycle)*

As a school enters their third year of the seven-year accreditation cycle, they are required to examine their previously completed annual reviews: prepare an annual review to present to a Mid-Point Reviewer. Developing annual reviews and presenting them to a Mid-Point Reviewer assures that schools maintain momentum of continuous improvement. Frequently, the third year of the accreditation cycle is an excellent opportunity to modify original goals, and especially add goals if the former goals are completed, abandoned or the school recognizes a need to develop new directions for the school. Once the Mid-Point Review is complete, the school should at least complete annual reviews of their goals and action plans. The annual reviews completed by the school serve as an excellent resource for the school to initiate their reaccreditation plan in the fifth year of the seven year accreditation.

II. Current Status of the School *(This section will include any changes the school has experienced since the original accreditation.) Comments may include, but are not limited to:*

- a. Demographic and/or school enrollment changes
- b. Major organizational changes
- c. Major curriculum changes
- d. Major changes that relate to any of the Middle States Standards for Accreditation

III. Analysis of Progress Achieved on the Original Action Plan *(The Mid-Point Visitor will comment on progress which the school has made on each goal of the school's original action plan. These comments should clearly describe progress made and note changes to goals and/or action steps of the plan.)*

IV. Analysis of Future Goals and Action Plans *(If the school has developed new goals for the future, or if it will continue to work toward the original goals, the Mid-Point Visitor will describe these goals and the continuing positive effects the school will experience as they are accomplished. It is essential that future goals and action*

plans be developed in sufficient detail to best assure positive results.)

V. Concluding Comments *(The Mid-Point Visitor will comment on significant strengths of the school's action plan and also describe any needs which have been identified.)*

