

St Mary School completes Rigorous Accreditation Process and Charts New 5-Year Goals

Every five years, each Catholic school in the state of Ohio must apply for a renewal of its status with the Ohio Catholic School Accrediting Association (OCSAA). OCSAA standards are approved by the Ohio State Board of Education as equivalent to the Ohio Department of Education's Operating Standards for Ohio's Schools.

St Mary School recently completed the initial two-year phase of the accreditation process after an in-depth self-study that resulted in a new five-year School Improvement Plan. The OCSAA requires that the school identify one goal that focuses on improving our Catholic mission and one that aims to improve student academic performance.

You might remember filling out a parent survey last year; in addition, all students in grades 4-8 were surveyed during computer class at school. Our teachers completed surveys and met multiple times to review IOWA and DIBELS data (two standardized tests our students take annually) and ACRE (Assessment of Child/Youth Religious Education) scores with the help of Sharon Willmes, Director of Leadership Development & Professional Growth at the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.

Qualitative data from the surveys and quantitative data from the standardized tests were carefully combined and charted to determine the two goals for St Mary School for the next five years. These goals are:

1. Catholic: Provide more opportunities for students to participate in service activities and social justice. We will do this by increasing students' understanding and applying the [Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching](#). St Mary School seeks to accomplish this by creating more faith formation opportunities across grade levels in which students can interact with one another and participate in meaningful service activities. We have already begun thoughtfully incorporating these themes into our monthly Saint Families meetings. We will work on further developing this aspect of our program with the help of Sean Ater, the Director of the Center for New Evangelization at the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.
2. Academic: Offer more instructional strategies and activities to help students think critically, problem solve, and use different approaches to meet the needs of all students. To address this goal, we will employ the principles of an educational theory called [Depth of Knowledge](#) by Dr. Norman Webb. Teachers have already read [Diving Into Strategic Thinking](#) by Gwendolyn Leninger and Sandra Adams. They will work with Krista Devine, Curriculum Director of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, in our Wednesday PLC (Professional Learning Community) meetings and full-day in-services to develop classroom strategies that cross curricula and grade levels. Other books our teachers will refer to include [Grading from the Inside Out](#) by Tom Schimmer and [Standard-Based Learning in Action](#) by Schimmer/Hillman/Stalets.

Other feedback from the surveys and testing data is being used as we seek ways to improve your children's religious and academic development. If you are interested in learning more about how our teachers collaborate to achieve our school goals, we invite you to visit the links above. Our school staff and administration are working hard to build our team, develop our curriculum horizontally (across all curricular areas) and vertically (from grade level to grade level), and offer the best faith-centered education we can provide our students. Thank you for trusting their education to St Mary School.