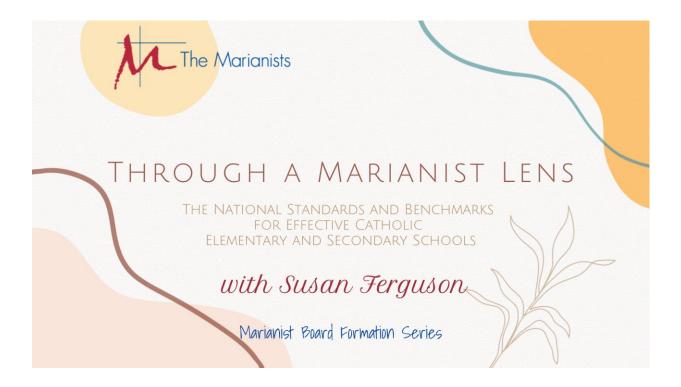# Supplement for "Through a Marianist Lens"

Marianist Board Formation Series

Reflection Questions

based on the

National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools

Available at www.catholicschoolstandards.com

With excerpts from the Manual titled:

Materials Prepared for the Mission Integration Committee of Marianist School Boards,

Available at www.marianist.com/board-resources

DOMAIN 1 (OF 4):

Mission and Catholic Identity

The Church's teaching mission includes inviting young people to a relationship with Jesus Christ or deepening an existing relationship with Jesus, inserting young people into the life of the Church, and assisting young people to see and understand the role of faith in one's daily life and in the larger society. "This unique Catholic identity makes our Catholic elementary and secondary schools 'schools for the human person' and allows them to fill a critical role in the future life of our Church, our country and our world" (The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, 1997). The following standards address Catholic identity and culture as vital to the mission of Catholic schools in the United States.

This domain has four Standards.

STANDARD 1 of 4 (DOMAIN 1):

An excellent Catholic school is guided and driven by a clearly communicated mission that embraces a Catholic Identity rooted in Gospel values, centered on the Eucharist, and committed to faith formation, academic excellence and service.

BENCHMARKS FOR STANDARD 1 (OF DOMAIN 1):

BENCHMARK 1.1

The governing body and the leader/leadership team ensure that the mission statement includes the commitment to Catholic identity.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR MARIANIST BOARDS:

a. Does the governing body and school leadership team speak about the mission of the school in terms articulated in the mission statement?
b. Is the language of the mission statement aligned with the school's foundational documents?
c. Has the school gone through a process where stakeholders have explored the heritage and vision of the school from a mission perspective?
d. Is there evidence that the commitment to Catholic identity articulated in the mission statement is present within the school?

BENCHMARK 1.2

The governing body and the leader/leadership team use the mission statement as the foundation and normative reference for all planning.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR MARIANIST BOARDS:

a. Do minutes of school meetings reflect a constructive use of the mission statement as a normative reference?
b. Do the orientation materials for families, faculty and staff describe the school's mission in intelligible terms?
c. Do announcements for new initiatives tie the initiative to the mission statement?

d. Do school budgets reflect adequate resources towards advancing the mission of the school?
e. Do financial allocations reflect assistance to serve the populations stated in the mission?
f. Does the curriculum and extracurricular activities of the school reflect the values espoused in the mission statement?

BENCHMARK 1.3
The school leader/leadership team regularly calls together the school's various constituencies (including but not limited to faculty and staff, parents, students, alumni(ae) to clarify, review and renew the school's mission statement.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR MARIANIST BOARDS:
a. Are survey documents for the mission statement review process available for review?
b. Is there a meeting with constituents scheduled on the school calendar to review the mission statement? Are there minutes for these meetings?
c. Is administering the mission review process part of a specific individual's job description?
d. Is there a process for processing the data for the review? For tracking the data from year to year?
e. Is there a process for communicating the review's results to the governing body and to the school community?
f. Can members of the school community describe how they learned the deeper meaning of the mission statement?

BENCHMARK 1.4
The mission statement is visible in public places and contained in official documents.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR MARIANIST BOARDS:
a. Do the school's publications, web pages, and social media interactions reflect verbal as well as symbolic expressions of the mission and the manner in which it infuses all that the school undertakes?

    b. Do the school's discipline policies and handbooks reflect the mission statement?

    c. How is the mission statement displayed? Is it a permanent or transitional display?

    d. How does the mission statement tie together the visible aspects of the school?

BENCHMARK 1.5
All constituents know and understand the mission.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR MARIANIST BOARDS:
a. Can school community members recite the mission statement from memory?

b. Is the mission statement used at public gatherings of the student body?

c. Is there a shorthand version of the mission statement that people can recite?

d. Can people relate the values and vocabulary of the mission statement to instances of their lives in the school?

e. What is the difference between the descriptions of the mission between those who are very involved in the school and those who are less involved in the school?

f. How comfortable are members of the school community in using the mission statement's Christian and Catholic language in discussing the work of the school?

g. Can members of the school community relate aspects of their personal development to the mission statement?

h. Can members of the school community describe how they learned the deeper meaning of the mission statement?

STANDARD 2 of 4 (DOMAIN 1):

An excellent Catholic school adhering to mission provides a rigorous academic program for religious studies and catechesis in the Catholic faith, set within a total academic curriculum that integrates faith, culture, and life.

BENCHMARKS FOR STANDARD 2:

BENCHMARK 2.1

Religious education curriculum and instruction meets the religious education requirements and standards of the (arch)diocese.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR MARIANIST BOARDS:
a. Does the religious studies curriculum reflect a thoughtful use of the (arch)diocesan requirements and standards for religious education?
b. If dealing with a high school: Are *The Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age* (USCCB) a guiding force in the selection of textbooks, and the content of the curriculum?
c. To what extend are school's curriculum framework, the courses of study, the syllabi and the teachers' lesson plans integrated from year to year according to (arch)diocesan requirements?
d. Are developmentally appropriate learning resources used at every level to advance curriculum requirements?

BENCHMARK 2.2

Religion classes are an integral part of the academic program in the assignment of teachers, amount of class time and the selection of texts and other curricular materials.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR MARIANIST BOARDS:
a. Do class schedules reflect appropriate time allotments for religion classes?

b. Is there evidence of teacher qualifications and preparation via lesson plans, professional development, or catechist certification?
c. What are the publication dates of textbooks and other instructional materials?
d. Are scope and sequence charts, curriculum maps and other course and topical sequences available?

BENCHMARK 2.3
Faculty who teach religion meet (arch)diocesan requirements for academic and catechetical preparation and certification to provide effective religion curriculum and instruction.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR MARIANIST BOARDS:
a. Is there a listing of the (arch) diocesan requirements for the preparation of faculty who teach religion in the school?
b. Is there a list of faculty members including both their academic degrees and catechetical certification?
c. Is there a statement of professional development requirements in view of catechetical certification?
d. Is there a list of faculty members who are progressing toward catechetical certification and their progress in the program?
e. Is there a plan to maintaining and advance certification for teachers of religious education?
f. Do teachers of religious education participate in professional development to address both pedagogical needs and content areas?

BENCHMARK 2.4
The school's Catholic identity requires excellence in academic and intellectual formation in all subjects including religious education.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR MARIANIST BOARDS:
a. Does the school's mission statement philosophy clearly state that the school is committed to academic excellence?
b. Does the curriculum guide indicate the anticipated outcomes for all subjects at all levels? Are these outcomes

in line with established norms for academic excellence? Is the religion department held to these norms?

c. Do student assessments in various forms demonstrate competency in communication, creativity, collaboration and critical thinking?

d. Do grading policies and rubrics indicate the academic rigor of the religious and non-religious academic programs?

e. Does the Professional Development Plan for the faculty contain a growth trajectory committed to academic excellence? Is the religion faculty held to these standards?

f. Is there evidence that the school actively attempts to integrate faith, culture and life through its academic programs? For example, do teachers share ideas and evaluate attempts to integrate faith, culture, and life on a timely basis?

BENCHMARK 2.5

Faculty use the lenses of Scripture and the Catholic intellectual tradition in all subjects to help students think critically and ethically about the world around them.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR MARIANIST BOARDS:

a. Do professional development plans for faculty formation include understandings of the Gospel and the Catholic intellectual tradition?

b. Are assessments of the faculty's ability to interpret and instruct with these lenses used?

c. Do student assessments measure students' ability to think critically and ethically about the world around them?

d. Do faculty or professional learning community meeting agendas demonstrate intentional discussions and curriculum planning on the use of Scripture and the Catholic intellectual tradition?

e. Do curriculum outcomes reflect an expectation that Scripture is used throughout the school? How are these measured?

BENCHMARK 2.6

Catholic culture and faith are expressed in the school through multiple and diverse forms of visual and performing arts, music and architecture.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR MARIANIST BOARDS:

a. Are symbols of the Catholic faith present throughout the building? (e.g. crucifixes, statues, pictures, etc.)
b. Do these symbols communicate the essence of the school's mission?
c. Does the school's architecture and use of space reflect the larger Catholic culture?
d. Are Scripture-based motivational bulletin boards and/or posters present?
e. Are samples of artwork created by students and/or faculty displayed in the school and posted on the school's website?
f. Do prayer services include music and the arts combining the talents of students and faculty?
g. Are there photos of students, faculty, and parents at events reflecting the Catholic faith and culture posted on social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter and on the school's website?
h. Do the art projects, school plays, and band/chorus concerts afford students the opportunity to explore the Catholic faith and culture?
i. Are students making the connection between issues of faith and 3-dimensional artwork?

BENCHMARK 2.7

The theory and practice of the Church's social teachings are essential elements of the curriculum.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR MARIANIST BOARDS:

a. Are curriculum outcomes aligned with the Church's social teaching?
b. Do specific programs of study at the secondary level focus on Catholic social teaching?

c. Do instructional materials and resources contain elements of Catholic social teaching?

d. Has the faculty received training on integrating CST (Catholic Social Teaching) into the various disciplines?

e. Do lesson plans and learning activities reflect a treatment of CST?

f. Are service projects aligned to elements of the Church's social teaching?

g. Are reflections geared towards meaningful thought about the impact of CST?

h. Can students and faculty articulate how service is integral to being Catholic?

STANDARD 3 of 4 (DOMAIN 1):

An excellent Catholic school adhering to mission provides opportunities outside the classroom for student faith formation, participation in liturgical and communal prayer, and action in service of social justice.

BENCHMARKS FOR STANDARD 3:

BENCHMARK 3.1

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

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR MARIANIST BOARDS:

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

BENCHMARK 3.2

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

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR MARIANIST BOARDS:

a. Are the costs associated with student retreats accounted for annually in the school budget?

b. Are retreats differentiated by age-level?
c. Do retreat leaders meet with students ahead of time to learn about the students' joys, anxieties, and hopes?
d. Does the retreat planning process include a meeting between the relevant school stakeholders to discuss the school's mission, charism and retreat outcomes?
e. Do students play a role in the planning of the retreat?
f. Do retreats provide a genuine departure from a typical school day?
g. Is the retreat evaluated? How extensively?
h. Do retreats provide students with fresh and innovative ways to recognize God in their lives?

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

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR MARIANIST BOARDS:
a. Do students have an age-appropriate understanding of why they are doing service?
b. Do school leaders, teachers and students discuss how the mission of the school informs service program opportunities?
c. Do service program leaders (including students) meet with charity leaders to understand the mission of the charity?
d. Do students connect the meaning of the Eucharist with their community service?
e. Are service projects designed to elevate students' understanding of social justice including an awareness of the systems that oppress others in your wider community?
f. Do students collaborate in selecting the charities the school will serve?
g. Are students given age-appropriate responsibilities in coordinating service programs?
h. Are students given time to reflect before and after a service project, comparing their expectations with realities, worries with joys? Is this reflection structured?

i. Are schools documenting their work, finding ways to measure the impact they are making in their service projects?
j. Do schools follow up with charities to understand ways to improve on the support they want to offer?

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

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

STANDARD 4 of 4 (DOMAIN 1):

An excellent Catholic school adhering to mission provides opportunities for adult faith formation and action in service of social justice.

BENCHMARKS FOR STANDARD 4:

BENCHMARK 4.1

The leader/leadership team provides retreats and other spiritual experiences for the faculty and staff on a regular and timely basis.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR MARIANIST BOARDS:

a. What is the structure of the faculty/Staff retreat program?
b. When are faculty/ staff retreats scheduled?
c. What is the frequency of the retreats?
d. What kinds of other spiritual experiences are offered to the faculty and staff?
e. Is there an ongoing program of individual as well as group discernment to measure the effectiveness of the program?
f. Are faculty and staff involved in the planning and execution of the program?

BENCHMARK 4.2

The leader/leadership team and faculty assist parents/ guardians in their role as the primary educators of their children in faith.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR MARIANIST BOARDS:

a. What kinds of support are offered to assist parents in the faith education of their children?
b. How are these supports communicated to parents? (e.g. workshops, parent meetings, blogs, etc.)
c. Is there any input from parents to determine what supports they need?
d. Is there any assessment of the effectiveness of these supports for future planning?
e. How are parental programs tied to the mission of the school?

- Is there a development model utilized so that parents can grow in their stewardship of the school's mission?

BENCHMARK 4.3

The leader/leadership team collaborates with other institutions (for example, Catholic Charities, Catholic higher education, religious congregation-sponsored programs) to provide opportunities for parents/ guardians to grow in the knowledge and practice of the faith.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR MARIANIST BOARDS:
a. With which institutions is the school collaborating?
b. What kinds of opportunities are offered for parents to grow in the knowledge and practice of the faith?
c. Is there any input from parents to determine what opportunities would best meet their needs?
d. Is there any assessment of the effectiveness of these collaborations and opportunities for future planning?
e. What is the depth of the collaboration with the selected institutions?

BENCHMARK 4.4

All adults in the school community are invited to participate in Christian service programs to promote the lived reality of action in service of social justice.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR MARIANIST BOARDS:
a. How does the school define "all adults in the school community"?
b. In what Christian service programs is the school involved?
c. How do these programs align with Catholic social teachings?
d. How are adults invited to participate in these Christian service programs?
e. To what extent are the adults in the school community able to recommend and/or design service projects?
f. Does the Christian service program include any preparatory opportunities for the adults to understand the teachings of

the Church regarding social justice and to recognize the Gospel's call to action?
- Does the Christian service program provide for Gospel reflection and sharing on the experience following each project?
- Is there any assessment of the effectiveness of these service programs and opportunities for future planning?

BENCHMARK 4.5
Every administrator, faculty, and staff member visibly supports the faith life of the school community.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR MARIANIST BOARDS:
a. In what visible ways are the administrators, faculty, and staff visibly supporting the faith life of the school community?
b. Do the administrators, faculty, and staff actively participate in school-wide prayer and liturgy?
c. Do the administrators, faculty, and staff engage in prayer and para-liturgical celebrations with their students in their classrooms?
d. Do the administrators, faculty, and staff pray together regularly?
e. Do administrators lead prayer publicly? Are prayers relevant to the times of year and the occasions?
f. In their relationships and interactions, do the administrators, faculty, and staff witness the presence of Jesus Christ in their lives?
g. Do the administrators, faculty and staff engage in Christian service projects?
h. Are the administrators, faculty and staff a faithful presence in the larger community on behalf of the school?
i. Can students describe how adults in the community have expressed their faith and support the faith life of the community?
j. Can students talk about an adult who serves as a personal role model for their faith development?