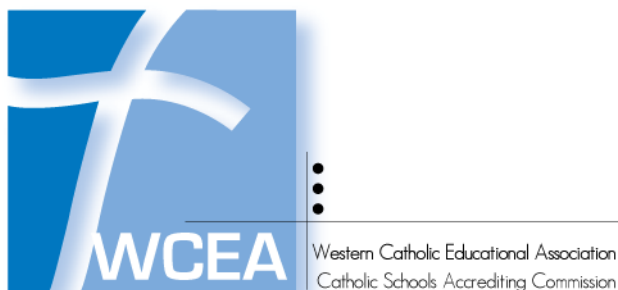


REPORT OF FINDINGS

E614 ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
2500 K STREET
SACRAMENTO, CA 95816
DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO



AND

WASC

IMPROVING STUDENT LEARNING 2012

**A SELF STUDY PROCESS
FOR CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS**

MARCH 8-10, 20

REPORT OF FINDINGS

for

St. Francis of Assisi Elementary School

E614



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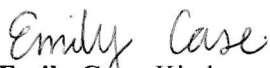
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PREFACE

We, the Visiting Committee, wish to commend you, the pastor, administration, faculty, staff, parents, and student body of St. Francis of Assisi Elementary School for working together to make the school a loving, caring and learning environment. We pray that the good work that you have done and the plans that you have made for the future will help you become an even better school.

The team found our three days at St. Francis of Assisi Elementary School professionally rich and personally rewarding. We experienced a community where everyone is striving to provide a Catholic environment where quality education is a priority.

We wish to thank all of you, pastor, principal, faculty, staff, parents and students for your warm and gracious hospitality.

May the Christ we serve bless you with every success as you journey into your future.

Chapter 1: Introduction

A. How the Self Study was Conducted

St. Francis of Assisi Elementary School began its Self Study process in June of 2021 and concluded in December 2022. The surveys were distributed in the fall of 2022.

The Leadership Team was led by the 6th grade teacher/Middle Years Program (MYP) coordinator, and included the principal, the associate principal, the finance director, the advancement director, the vice principal, and the Primary Years Program (PYP) coordinator. Regularly scheduled meetings were held with a variety of shareholders, including the principal, faculty, staff, students, alumni, and Catholic School Advisory Committee (CSAC) to prepare the Self Study. These same shareholders participated in data analysis, surveys and discussions. Mixed, integral committees were created for each section of Chapter 3.

Committees, including parents, alumni and students, drafted the narrative of the Self Study, and also took part in reviewing and editing each section of Chapter 3. The committees met formally at least once a month and Google Docs provided the opportunity for collaboration.

The Pastor joined the staff in July 2022 and did not have a significant role in this Self Study. However, interviews with the Pastor, administration, faculty, students and parents revealed that the pastor is vocal about the school being the primary ministry of the Parish and his desire to be a positive influence in the school improvement plan.

The school noticed less participation (less than half) in the faculty and parent surveys and analyzed possible reasons for the reduced response to be digital overload. The school initially postponed its Self Study because of the onset of the pandemic, yet once started, finished the Self Study in a reasonable time frame.

B. Involvement and Collaboration of Shareholders in Completing the Self Study

Accreditation Factor #1: *The school involves all shareholders in data review, analysis and dialogue about perceived accomplishments in the area of student learning, and in developing, implementing and monitoring goals for improvements in student learning.*

Based on the Self Study, interviews and surveys, the Visiting Committee found that St. Francis of Assisi Elementary School (SFE) was highly effective in including all shareholder groups in the preparation of the Self Study. The percentage of survey responses from students was high, and the inclusion of alumni indicates the intention to include all groups. Only about half of the staff and roughly a third of the families, CSAC, and parish staff participated in the surveys.

Editing and revising the Mission and Philosophy was done as part of a formal strategic planning process that involved all shareholders.

During the creation of the Action Plan, the leadership team took part in analyzing data in order to create the goals and strategies for the Action Plan. Implementing the Action Plan strategies will be done by appropriately identified shareholders, and monitoring the progress will include sharing information

internally and publically as appropriate.

SLE data is collected through the use of a rubric one time a year. Based on teacher interviews, the data is not analyzed, and not used to influence curriculum supporting the achievement of the SLEs.

Teachers analyze data in order to inform their teaching. Longitudinal reports from STAR testing numbers are passed from one year to the next. Assessment data is shared with students and achievement data is available to parents. A systemic analysis and communication of student achievement would enhance high achievement for all students.

The listing of accomplishments from each section validates a strong trajectory of ongoing and intense school improvement. The goals for each section, prior to them being condensed (and not included in the Self Study), are a better indication of how well the school identified areas for improvement.

The different shareholder groups at SFE effectively and extensively gather, analyze, manage and report data on enrollment, finance, Franciscan values, social-emotional health, and student achievement. This intentionality improves the school and supports high achievement for all students.

Chapter 2: Context of the School

A. School Profile

In 1895, St. Francis of Assisi Elementary School was opened by the Franciscans and the Sisters of Mercy. In 1901, the day-to-day operations were transferred to Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity, and by 1926, the school had significantly increased in size and the current three-story school building was finished. In 2016, the last Franciscan pastor left the parish and the first diocesan pastor was assigned.

During the pandemic, the three remaining Friars left, leaving the community without a Franciscan presence. In July 2022, a new pastor was named. The school and the parish have intentionally desired to ensure that the Franciscan traditions remain integral to the school.

The student population is 45% self-identified non-caucasian with 15% speaking a second language at home. Five percent of the community is receiving financial aid. Three-fourths of the students are Catholic, and 60% are registered parishioners at St. Francis. The school's urban setting in the Midtown area of Sacramento serves as a benefit for the majority of the families that work in government capacities near downtown Sacramento. Many families commute to school every day from as far away as 20-25 miles.

Enrollment is considered full with waiting lists for several grades. It is also purported that the school's response to COVID was well-organized and well-received and was instrumental in building interest in the school. According to the surveys, academic excellence and the sense of community were clearly the greatest factors for families to send their child to SFE. Franciscan and Catholic tradition and diversity also rank high. The parent group reiterated these sentiments with their responses about the strengths of the school.

Based on interviews, staff turnover is relatively low and morale is high. Alumni come back to work at the school. The surveys show that the faculty, staff, parents and students are highly satisfied with the school.

In 2016, St. Francis of Assisi Elementary School began the process to become an International Baccalaureate (IB) school. This move was prompted by the administration recognizing how well the IB philosophy and practice parallel the global Franciscan traditions. The younger grades have been approved and the middle years are close to approval.

Since the last accreditation cycle, the school expanded its Resource Program, now serving 40 students. Hiring a full-time Director of Achievement was instrumental in this improvement.

The school has split the middle school language arts and math classes to reduce the student-teacher ratio. One area of school and parish life that has witnessed the biggest impact through the pandemic has been the service to the community and other school and parish events. This is most evident with the absence of regular participation in Mass and other parish activities. The school has identified Action Plan strategies to restore and improve service to the community.

SFE has been highly effective in compiling and analyzing annual data, identifying major changes and trends since the last Self Study, and projecting solutions. They maintain healthy enrollment and finances, are strong academically, are diverse, and have healthy staffing and robust programs. They understand the honor of being in this position and intend to maintain, sustain, and continuously improve.

B. Use of Prior Accreditation Findings to Support High Achievement of All Students

Accreditation Factor #2: *The school has used the prior accreditation findings, both those discovered by the school and those identified by the Visiting Committee, and other pertinent data to ensure high achievement of all students and to drive school improvement.*

It is clear from the Self Study and from the Visiting Committee interactions with the pastor, administration, faculty, staff and parents, that the shareholders are action-oriented and focused on results that will benefit students. From 2016 Critical Goals:

Goal #1 Develop and implement formal curriculum mapping to further the continuum of learning in conjunction with the SLEs. (3E / Science In-Depth Goal #1)

The Action Plan from 2016 was to use backward design to curriculum map the content areas for SFE. The process was shifted to meet the needs of the newly adopted IB Curriculum, and focus on their IB candidacy involving staff development, initial mapping, and unit designs. Despite COVID and the shift to distance learning, the IB Primary Years Program completed its Program of Inquiry mapping and the Middle Years Program completed all core subject mapping. The faculty and staff worked on aligning the IB criteria with Common Core Standards and the diocesan standards-referenced grading. The school holds weekly curriculum meetings to develop and plan the implementation of units, and to finish the application for authorization by IB.

Goal #2 was to: Enhance the integration of technology into the teaching/learning process and further the development and implementation of technology. (3F / 3G)

Early in the Action Plan cycle, a full-time Technology Director was hired, a technology plan was written and a Technology Club was created. New technology, software programs, online access, and professional development were added. Distance learning was successfully navigated with a focus on device and internet access for students and teachers using Google Classroom and Zoom. The addition of an online math platform and multiple online formats for supplemental support allowed learning to continue. The other strategies, including, additional class sets of Chromebooks and new teacher computers, new online safe filtering, maintenance and service of devices and refresh of older computers is supporting the high achievement of all students.

Goal #3: Enhance and ensure the viability and longevity of St. Francis of Assisi Elementary School.

A Strategic Plan workshop facilitated the success of Goal #3. The resulting plan focused on four goals: to strengthen student success, maintain a Franciscan identity, safeguard longevity, and improve facilities. Fulfillment of these goals has surfaced the newly-implemented IB program, rebranding of the school, developing a new website, rewriting mission and philosophy statements, adding a vision statement, adjusting the SLEs, starting a golf tournament, hiring a Director of Advancement, rekindling relationships with alumni, active involvement in the community, new forms of communication, and enhanced admissions process and experience.

Goal #4 Enhance and make our Franciscan values and charism even more evident and clear in the Mission Statement, Philosophy and SLEs. (3B) and Goal #5 Enhance disaggregation, analysis and correlation of all assessment data for curricular improvement. (3D / Science In-Depth Goal #1)

The final two goals were mentioned in the Self Study, but no details of accomplishment were given. Based on physical evidence and interviews, the fourth goal was addressed when the school rewrote its mission and philosophy statements, added a vision statement, and adjusted the SLEs during the Strategic Planning process.

Based on interviews with the Director of Achievement and Staff, data disaggregation, analysis, and correlation of all assessment data for curricular improvement (Goal#5) isn't yet formalized. The school has included a data analysis strategy in Goal 2, Strategy 2 of the new Action Plan. It is apparent to the Visiting Committee that the Administration, Leadership, Faculty and Staff of SFE were effective in using the prior accreditation findings and the Action Plans to support the high achievement of all students.

Chapter 3: Quality of the School Program

A. Assessment of the School's Catholic Identity

Accreditation Factor #3: *The school is Catholic, approved by the Local Ordinary (Canon 803), providing opportunities for community worship and participation in the Sacraments, and promoting evangelization and service to the community.*

The Visiting Committee observed that Catholic Identity surveys were administered to students, parents and teachers as appropriate. The School Improvement Surveys include questions that address Religion, faith and values. The quality of religious education, using *Alive in Christ* materials, sacramental preparation, daily and weekly prayer, monthly Mass, a variety of liturgical events throughout the year, religious symbols and service projects are the foundation of the school's Franciscan charism and Catholic Identity.

The religion curriculum and methods of instruction are aligned with the requirements of the Diocese of Sacramento and the USCCB. Religious signs and symbols are abundant in the school environment. Traditions and rituals exist to support the student's development.

All staff are required to earn basic catechist certification and complete ten hours of additional faith formation annually. Almost all staff members meet this requirement. SFE Faculty and Staff continue their Catholic faith formation by attending diocesan Ministry Days and participating in monthly faith-sharing meetings, and yearly staff retreats. Parents are encouraged to attend all religious celebrations and to participate in the sacramental preparation of their children. However, the administration acknowledges that one area of growth that has been identified is the faith formation of adults and families. Families were unable to come together regularly during COVID and it continues to pose a challenge.

Alive in Christ has allowed the school to further students' understanding and faith by making information easier for students to process and provides for conversations at home. In compliance with the standards and expectations of the Diocese of Sacramento, the Self Study says SFE's religious education follows the bishop's academic sequence of Old Testament (6th grade), New Testament (7th grade) and Church History (8th grade).

The school provides opportunities for service-oriented outreach to the larger community. Some of the service projects identified include collecting funds and items to donate to charities within the community. There is no student service hour requirement at this time.

In the student survey, only 45% say they discuss faith with their parents or are able to articulate the Franciscan values. Parent survey data indicates a need to increase opportunities for informal discussions of student faith formation, family participation in Mass, and family service outside of school. The school has identified the desire to enhance their Franciscan, Catholic spirituality in order to nurture community growth in faith, service, and Franciscan charism. In speaking with parents, the COVID pandemic most likely influenced their responses to the parent survey as traditional activities and opportunities were postponed or approached differently.

It is apparent to the Visiting Committee that the Pastor, administration, faculty and staff of SFE is effective in meeting this accreditation factor. It is noted that since the last accreditation cycle, the school has eliminated the word “Catholic” from its public, published Mission and Philosophy statements.

B. Defining the School’s Purpose

Accreditation Factor #4: *The school’s purpose is defined through the school’s mission statement, philosophy, measurable Schoolwide Learning Expectations, Arch/diocesan curriculum standards (local curriculum standards where Arch/diocesan standards don’t exist), and other governing authority expectations.*

The Visiting Committee observed that SFE is deeply rooted in its Franciscan heritage and values. The school has gone to great lengths to include all shareholders in the evaluation and revision of the school’s mission statement and philosophy, ultimately forming the current language for each. The mission statement models the school’s vision for developing students who are well-rounded and globally-minded.

It is the opinion of the Visiting Committee that the mission statement and philosophy do not reflect the strong Catholicity observed at the school. The faculty and staff are connected on a personal and spiritual level to the Franciscan heritage of the school. The incorporation of the IB program lends itself to the universality and global nature of the Church, and Catholicism is frequently brought into the IB lesson format. While the revised mission and philosophy statements lack verbiage connecting the school specifically to the Catholic Church and faith, the school is an excellent Catholic school.

The Student Learning Expectations have been revised to incorporate key vocabulary from the IB program to connect the goals of the program to the desired student outcomes. The Visiting Committee observed how frequently the SLEs are incorporated into lessons and daily life at SFE. The students are familiar with the SLEs and proudly showcased their understanding of them during interviews and classroom observations.

The school’s CSAC meets regularly with and advises the principal. According to the Self Study, they also initiate projects to further programs tied to Franciscan values, update policies, review the budget, and advise the administration on the needs of the parents.

Overall, the shareholders of SFE find the community and curriculum to be rich in faith and Franciscan values and committed to the principles of an IB education.

It is the recommendation of the Visiting Committee that the school reevaluates the omission of specific language connecting SFE to the Catholic faith. As members of the community who live Franciscan values daily, the faculty, staff, students, and parents have an understanding of the school’s Catholicity through lived experiences. To the greater community who has yet to experience what the school offers in terms of Catholic fulfillment, it is the opinion of the Visiting Committee that an important piece of evangelization is to publicly proclaim the school’s specifically Catholic identity.

The Visiting Committee finds SFE to be effective in this accreditation factor.

C. Organization for Student Learning to Support High Achievement of All Students

Accreditation Factor #5: *The organizational structures of the school focus on high achievement of all students, and communicate student progress to all shareholders.*

The Visiting Committee observed that the school is renewing its relationship with the parish, led by the enthusiasm and commitment of the pastor. The Visiting Committee would like to commend the pastor on his history of unwavering support for Catholic education and his zeal for bringing Christ to the school. During the Parent Focus Group, there was a palpable excitement regarding the relationship of the school with the parish. The principal meets with the pastor regularly. Based on observation, SFE has a positive relationship with the diocese and other diocesan schools. These relationships help support the high achievement of student learning.

Based on the Visiting Committee's observations, Parent and Student Focus Groups, and interview with the Pastor, the relationship between the staff and the students is highly supportive. The parents in particular are grateful for the care and concern shown for their children and are willing to reciprocate. The parents find the level of communication within the school is highly effective and one of the school's strengths.

According to the Self Study, and reiterated in interviews with the staff, parents, and students, faculty effectively plan and facilitate community and faith activities including prayer services and service projects. The Liturgy Coordinator guides grades one through eight as they take turns planning and leading the entire school in Monday morning prayer, Friday prayer services, and monthly Masses.

According to the Self Study, grades TK through one have full-time instructional aides and grades two through eight have part time aide support. In addition, grades six through eight are divided in half for Language Arts and Mathematics classes to reduce the student-teacher ratio. A full-time Director of Achievement communicates with faculty, staff, and parents about individual students' learning needs. The director helps administer school-wide testing in reading and math and leads regular Student Support Team (SST) meetings.

Academic grades are available on the school's online gradebook. Students and parents receive a digital copy of the report card each trimester. With the move to IB, the middle school is in transition to use ManageBac, to monitor student growth on IB objectives, view classroom units, and maintain a portfolio. The Primary Years Program has the Program of Inquiry curriculum online. Parents are able to see the content covered in the classroom for both PYP and MYP online. Teachers are readily available to parents via email, in-person, and during the fall Parent-Teacher conferences to collaborate and discuss student progress. The school noted that one area that would be beneficial for student achievement is the collaboration and interaction with other IB schools since they are the only Diocesan, IB elementary school in California.

The Visiting Committee finds SFE to be highly effective in this accreditation factor. The Visiting Team also wishes to commend the administration on its commitment to the care and education of the students of St. Francis of Assisi Elementary School.

D. Data Analysis and Action to Support High Achievement of All Students

Accreditation Factor #6: *The school uses educationally sound assessment processes to collect data. The school disaggregates and analyzes student performance data and uses the analysis as a basis for instructional/curricular improvement.*

The visiting team observed that SFE uses data to measure student proficiency. Standardized assessment data in the areas of reading and math is collected four times per year using STAR Renaissance testing in grades one through eight. The Director of Achievement provides feedback to teachers following each STAR test and uses data as one factor in determining eligibility for resource instruction. Faculty members independently review various reports showing percentiles, scaled scores, and specified student skill reports to drive groupings for instruction.

In partnership with the school's Director of Achievement, the faculty addresses areas of need for students who are below benchmark achievement, and instruction is differentiated in the classroom so students at varying levels of low, average, or high understanding have appropriate opportunities to grow.

Teachers collaborate to ensure continuity in the progression of reading and writing skills from grade level to grade level, and junior high students are placed in smaller math classes, or even Algebra, based on assessment performance and teacher observations.

Through analysis of testing data, the school noted that standardized math scores were noticeably lower school-wide than they had been prior to the pandemic and the move to distance and hybrid learning. Longitudinal reports suggest that generally, classes are showing recovery trends post-pandemic. According to the Self Study and review of scores, SFE typically score at or above diocesan and national averages in both math and reading.

In addition to academic performance, SFE uses data from feedback on Catholic Identity and Improving Student Learning surveys. It should be noted that feedback on many of the surveys came at a time when COVID restrictions were still in place in Sacramento County, so responses indicating a desire for greater opportunities are likely aligned with the restrictive nature of the safety protocols rather than a lack of community and faith opportunities. This was corroborated by the parents during their meeting with the Visiting Committee. Student and parent feedback suggests families are very pleased with the quality of the religious and educational programs along with community events offered at SFE.

The Visiting Committee finds SFE to be effective in this accreditation factor.

E. High Achievement By All Students Toward Clearly Defined SLEs and Curriculum Standards

Accreditation Factor #7: *All students make acceptable and measurable progress toward clearly defined Schoolwide Learning Expectations and challenging, comprehensive, and relevant curriculum standards.*

The Visiting Committee observed that SFE incorporates Franciscan and Catholic values through the school programs and culture of the school. The SLE's have become a part of the fabric of the school and are intentionally woven into discussion and decision making. The Visiting Committee observed bulletin boards, writing assignments and student discussions that included expression of the SLEs and IB Learner

Profiles. Focus groups responded to questions about SLEs with a clear understanding of the purpose of the school. There is an emphasis on community and the responsibility of one another toward the community.

The school's CSAC, the administration and the staff regularly participate in modeling the SLEs. The administration and the staff use the SLE's during classroom assignments and assessments, to mediate conflict, handle disciplinary issues, and manage the classroom. A rubric is used for student and family reflection regarding evaluation of SLE's, however the data is not formally analyzed nor acted upon.

The currently offered curriculum is inclusive of the California Common Core State Standards, NGSS and is delivered with an IB pedagogy. These standards are assessed with a variety of methods that show that all students are making acceptable progress. The Self Study indicated that the use of technology has enhanced the ability to meet the learning needs of students. Interviews with teachers and leadership team members affirm this observation.

The use of STAR testing identifies students who may need additional help from the Director of Achievement. The Student Support Team is instrumental in monitoring student progress, especially those who have been identified as learners who need additional support.

The school is commended on the ongoing progress toward achieving pre-COVID levels of academic proficiency and high achievement by all students.

The school is effective in ensuring all students make acceptable and measurable progress toward clearly defined Schoolwide Learning Expectations and a challenging, comprehensive, and relevant curriculum.

F. Instructional Methodology to Support High Achievement of All Students

Accreditation Factor #8: *The staff applies research-based knowledge about teaching and learning in the instructional process. Assessment is frequent and varied, integrated into the teaching/learning process, and informs curriculum planning.*

The Faculty and staff were observed modeling Catholic values throughout the day while teaching, giving student feedback and interacting with one another.

SFE uses a variety of methods to meet the needs of all students. The Self Study and interviews with teachers indicate that small group instruction is used when feasible. The Visiting Team observed primarily whole group, direct instruction. The Director of Achievement was observed working with small groups and individual students outside classrooms and pushing into classrooms to work with students.

The IB model uses inquiry based methodology. It assesses students based on a growth model, and students are aware of their progress and are able to be active participants in their learning process.

According to the Self Study, SFE teachers and administrators have been involved, through their respective grade level clusters, to help build subject guides that prioritize standards and concepts. The teachers are creating proficiency scales to assess student achievement and mastery. This will lead to a

standards-referenced report card that will need to be integrated with the IB program.

The evidence folders validate that teachers use a variety of informal, formative and summative assessments. This includes bell ringers, check-ins, homework, hands-on activities, quizzes, exit tickets, writing or journaling. Some assessments have become project-based such as models, brochures, papers, slide shows, presentations, town-hall meetings, conferences, performances, or testing. As an IB school, fifth graders do a capstone project and eighth graders will in the future.

Teachers report the use of a wide variety of online programs for assignments, additional instruction, and assessments. The Visiting Committee observed students and teachers using Zoom, Nearpod, Google Classroom, Google Docs, GeoGebra, and Epic. Teachers used document cameras and projection monitors to instruct and engage students.

The entire school has invested significant time, energy, and funds to successfully integrate the IB program into the school. Two areas of improvement were identified in this section of the narrative. They were to “complete IB MYP authorization” and “align IB objectives and criteria with standards referenced grading”. These were combined into a broader goal stated as: “Use and implement systems and programs to enhance student well-being and improve learning experiences.”

Given the immense collaborative work to incorporate the IB program, the Visiting Committee finds SFE to be highly effective in this accreditation factor.

G. Support for Student Spiritual, Personal, and Academic Growth

Accreditation Factor #9: *Within the school’s community of faith, students have opportunities to participate in support services and activities to assist them in accessing the curricular and co-curricular programs to achieve the Schoolwide Learning Expectations, Arch/diocesan curriculum standards (local curriculum standards where Arch/diocesan standards don’t exist), and other governing authority expectations.*

The Visiting Team observed that the school supports the spiritual growth of students through various activities such as weekly prayer services, retreats, and the celebration of the Feast of St. Francis. The students and staff attend Mass once a month. SFE offers daily prayers, service projects and religion classes to help students grow in their faith. By welcoming families of other faith backgrounds into their community, listening to music, describing art, reading history, and discussing other world views, students and staff are better able to understand diversity and warmly welcome new families into their school community. While COVID hindered some of their face-to-face community events, it helped them find other creative ways of engaging with the school community.

Students are encouraged to participate in a plethora of curricular and extracurricular activities before, during, and after school. These activities include Student Council to PAL sports.

St. Francis has developed emergency plans, maintains equipment, and performs emergency drill scenarios. All grades participate in a monthly fire drill at various times of the day. At the beginning and middle of the year, the associate principal discusses and performs “intruder alerts.” The school applied for and has received a \$173,000 grant for security updates, and the parish received an additional \$43,000.

Beyond preparing students and staff with emergency drills, the physical security of campus includes: alarm systems, video surveillance, exterior gates, a coded front door, three AED machines, and first aid kits in every room. During COVID, classes were cohorted, inside and outside of the building, and teachers were required to wear masks, test, maintain social distancing in the classroom, and sanitize tables, chairs and other surfaces.

The Self Study indicates that parent volunteers are used for library coverage and some art classes. Volunteers complete and submit required paperwork, fingerprinting, online training, as well as proof of COVID vaccination (ending at the end of this school year).

SFE houses a technology lab with a Chromebook cart and multiple-use media tables for increased collaboration space for students and teachers. Grades 3-8 have Chromebooks at a 1:1 ratio, and all classrooms have Smart TVs equipped with Apple TVs and Chromecast. The students participate in a Design Curriculum which supports the IB program.

The Extension Program is attended by nearly half of the student body and provides for a well organized, engaging active extension of the school day. The students enjoy it, and the extended day provides an essential service to working families.

SFE also has a cafeteria and a kitchen staff who prepares lunch for students.

The Self Study indicates the school has close to \$12,000 available annually for Professional Development from Title II funds, and received two Payroll Protection Program (PPP) loans that allowed the school to cover deficits. Erate is not used, as the return is minimal for a school with their demographics.

The Visiting Committee met with the Director of Achievement who currently supports 40 students who are performing below grade level in English Language Arts and/or Math. The support occurs 1:1 or in small groups. Additionally, she works closely with 17 students who have qualified for services based on an IEP or 504 Plan.

Based on interviews, the principal and associate principal are currently serving in the counselor role and supporting students. School administration acknowledges that these are two areas that have not been addressed following the retirement of a part-time counselor and a librarian. The continued vacancy of these two positions limits the services previously offered. The school plans to redesign the library and technology lab into a media/design center. The original areas of improvement in this section were identified as “Enhance school perimeter security” and “Continue to upgrade technology”.

The Visiting Committee finds SFE to be highly effective in this accreditation factor.

H. Resource Management and Development to Support High Achievement of All Students

Accreditation Factor #10: *The pastor, principal, and school board develop, implement, and monitor resources and plans to ensure and support high achievement of all students of the Schoolwide Learning*

Expectations, Arch/diocesan curriculum standards (local curriculum standards where Arch/diocesan standards don't exist), and other governing authority expectations.

The Visiting Committee observed SFE's transparent approach to resource management and fiscal budgeting. Collaboration among the pastor, the Catholic Schools Department, the school's administration, and the parish is evident in the school's budgeting process. The initial draft of the budget is created by the principal and Director of Finance with input of the pastor, reviewed by the finance officer at the Catholic Schools Department, and final approval is given by the Parish Finance Council. The administration ensures that the budgeting process is thorough and a reflection of good stewardship.

Most of the school's financial resources come from having strong enrollment numbers. The majority of applicants are younger students applying to TK and Kindergarten. Enrollment has remained steady pre- and post-pandemic in the low 300s; the school currently educates 321 students in TK-8th grades. Additionally, over half of the students are enrolled in the Extension program, which accounts for 15% of the school's net operating income.

St. Francis of Assisi Elementary School is working to build a strong social media presence and is reaching out to alumni through a newsletter and anniversary events. Hiring a Director of Advancement and an Admissions/Advancement Assistant has enabled the school to increase its efforts to expand marketing and fundraising.

The pandemic had a negative impact on the school's finances and resulted in significant operating deficits which were offset by two, now-forgiven, Payroll Protection Program loans. The school increased tuition at a higher rate than in previous years, but it provides tuition assistance in the form of paid-in-full discounts, faculty discounts, and school, parish, and diocesan sponsored financial aid. The school is presently operating with a balanced budget.

Interviews with the pastor, administration, and CSAC indicate that facility needs and maintenance costs on the older building are a challenge. There is a desire to remodel one of the buildings into a preschool and this is reflected in the Action Plan. The pastor and principal are considering a Capital Campaign to fund necessary renovations.

The Visiting Committee finds SFE to be highly effective in this accreditation factor.

Chapter 4: The Action Plan

A. Design and Alignment of the Action Plan with the Self Study Findings

Accreditation Factor #11 (The Action Plan addresses the school's critical goals to enhance student learning that supports high achievement of all students of the Schoolwide Learning Expectations, Arch/diocesan curriculum standards (local curriculum standards where Arch/diocesan standards don't exist), and other institutional and/or governing authority expectations.)

Schoolwide Lists of Significant Accomplishments and Critical Goals

Schoolwide Significant Accomplishments (the eight most significant determined by the VC)

1. Sacramental preparation within the school
2. Incorporation of IB into the curriculum and identity
3. Variety of extracurricular activities
4. Student Council collaboration with parish
5. Longevity of staff
6. Implemented formal teacher collaboration time every Thursday
7. Further development of EAS Program
8. Thriving Extension Program

These were the original areas of growth for each of the sections of Chapter 3

A:

- Implement and integrate Franciscan virtues in all aspects of school life
- Develop and implement religious community engagement program

B:

- Provide further opportunities for families to grow together in faith, service and Franciscan charism

C:

- Find and collaborate with other IB schools
- Formalize systems for better communication and monitoring of student progress
- Facilitate parental faith formation to help students grow in their faith

D:

- Utilize data for collaboration across grade levels
- Engage families with more faith formation activities

E:

- Complete IB authorization for MYP
- Implement IB Community Project in 8th Grade
- Further develop cross-curricular and vertical collaboration

F:

- Complete IB MYP authorization
- Align IB objectives and criteria with standards reference grading

G:

- Enhance school perimeter security
- Continue to upgrade technology

H:

- Renovate friary and create preschool program

In September of 2022, the school summarized the Areas of Growth and identified and prioritized these Critical Goals (identified by school)

1. Enhance our Franciscan, Catholic spirituality in order to nurture community growth in faith, service, and Franciscan charism. *(3A / 3B / 3C / 3D)*
2. Utilize and implement systems and programs to enhance student well-being and improved learning experiences. *(3C / 3D / 3E / 3F / 3G)*
3. Further our current viable position in order to create more sustainable and impactful solutions for the longevity of St. Francis of Assisi Elementary School. *(3H)*

4. Advance and strengthen the security and safety of the school building and grounds in order to protect the well-being of our school community. (3G)
5. Maintain and expand technological resources to address the ever-changing landscape to support student achievement and teacher growth. (3G)

The Visiting Committee observed that without referring to the original Areas of Growth, included above, but removed from the Self Study in September 2022, the Action Plan does not appear to be clearly aligned with the goals.

Analysis of the strategies and activities listed under each goal reveal that Goal #1 is mostly related to the Franciscan vocabulary, service and community events, and faith formation for students.

Goal #2 includes communication of grades within FACTS and achievement of objectives and ManageBac software. Strategy 2 will help define the Faculty Collaboration time, and Strategy 3 will provide continued focus on full implementation of the IB program. Strategy #4 is about restoring the counseling and library services, including facilities improvement.

Goal #3, Strategy #1 is facilities, Strategy #2 is to develop a new Strategic Plan, including exploration of a Capital Campaign, fundraising, and facility improvements. Strategy #3 is to create an endowment and enhance teacher retention.

Goal #4, is focused on facilities, which will enhance the environment and in turn support student achievement..

Goal #5, depending on the strategies and activities that will be pursued could be student use of technology or the technology infrastructure.

The school's Action Plan is only somewhat focused on improving student achievement and SLEs. The choice of baseline, monitoring and ongoing assessment is incomplete in relation to the goals identified by the Self Study. The Visiting Team rates this Accreditation Factor as somewhat effective.

OPTION A: *Modification of a critical goal:*

We recommend that the school consider adding the word “Catholic” or “Christ centered” into their Mission Statement and Philosophy prior to moving forward with Goal 1.

OPTION B: *Critical Goal Identified by the Visiting Committee:*

N/A

B. Capacity to Implement and Monitor the Action Plan

Accreditation Factor #12: *The school demonstrates the capacity to implement and monitor an Action Plan that ensures high achievement of all students of the Schoolwide Learning Expectations, Arch/diocesan curriculum standards (local curriculum standards where Arch/diocesan standards don't exist), and other governing authority expectations.*

The Visiting Committee found that SFE was able to implement the previous Action Plan. The structure, staff, and processes are in place to manage change within the organization. This will help the school move forward with the current Action Plan. SFE has identified appropriate ways to establish baseline data, and to monitor progress. There are sufficient assessments in place, the teachers are adept at administering and analyze data to an acceptable level. Only Goals 1 and 2, the way they are written, represent a direct alignment to student achievement.

The strategies and supporting activities that are outlined in the Action Plan are mostly effective in identifying specific future steps to guide the school. Goal 2, Strategy 2 needs verbs in the activities to make them actionable. Shareholders will benefit from having more specifics to guide their actions.

The school has identified the people who will be responsible for implementation. Costs and other resources for each of the strategies are often listed as “TBD”. The timelines are reasonable.

Baseline assessment activities will include needs assessments, student, faculty and parent surveys, and feasibility studies. Monitoring the Action Plans is planned to include a review of existing materials, data analysis, and historic information reflection. Progress toward the Goals will be communicated to the shareholders through State of the School meetings, Annual Reports, banners, email blasts and the school website.

The condensation of the goals for each section was done early in the process, leaving a nebulous statement to develop into Target Areas and therefore loosely related and connected Action Plan.

The Visiting Team finds SFE as Effective in their ability to implement the Action Plan.

Visiting Committee Summary Thoughts:

The school is renewing its relationship with the parish, led by the enthusiasm and commitment of the pastor. The Visiting Committee would like to commend the pastor on his history of unwavering support for Catholic education and his zeal for bringing Christ to the school. There is a palpable excitement regarding the relationship of the school with the parish.

The entire school has invested significant time, energy, and funds to successfully integrate the IB program into the school. The collaboration of the faculty and staff is admirable.

Overall, the shareholders of SFE find the community and curriculum to be rich in faith and Franciscan values and committed to the principles of an IB education. It is apparent that the community the pastor, administration, faculty and staff have fostered for the students and parents of SFE is a warm, welcoming, and inclusive environment in which to learn, live, and serve.