



NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES, INC.  
COMMISSION ON INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

**Visiting Committee Report**

**Saint Joseph Regional School/Our Lady of Mercy Academy**

92 Wilson Street  
Keene, NH

**Christopher Smith**  
*Principal*

**Chair**  
Mrs. Margaret Williamson

Foundation Visit: March 29, 2022

Program Visit: October 16, 2022 - October 19, 2022

# Roster of Team Members

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## Chair(s)

**Chair: Mrs. Margaret Williamson**

*Principal*

St. Mary's School

Simsbury, CT

**Assistant Chair: Mr. Michael Clark**

*Founding Head of School*

Saint Paul Diocesan Jr./Sr. High School

Worcester, MA

## VC Members

**Ms. Karen Dufresne**

*Middle School Mathematics Teacher*

Wilbraham & Monson Academy

Wilbraham, MA

**Mrs. Beth Hamilton**

*Associate Director for Accreditation and School Improvement / Foundation Visiting Committee Member*

New England Association of Schools and Colleges

Lowell, MA

**Ms. Patricia McKernan**

*Science Teacher*

Immaculate High School

Danbury, CT

**Ms. Rachel Rumely**

*Assistant Head of School, Pre-K to Grade 3*

Saint Columbkille Partnership School

Brighton, MA

**Mrs. Mollie Williams**

*Principal*

Ste Jeanne d'Arc School

Lowell, MA

# Introduction

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Founded in 1885, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc. (NEASC) is the nation's oldest accrediting agency. Since its inception in 1885, the Association has awarded accreditation to educational institutions in the six New England states that seek voluntary affiliation.

The governing body of NEASC is its Board of Trustees which oversees the work of three Commissions:

- Commission on International Education
- Commission on Independent Schools
- Commission on Public Schools

The evaluation program which the schools undergo is a three-fold process: the Self-Study conducted by the school, the evaluation by the Visiting Team, and the follow-up program carried out by the school to implement the findings of its own Self-Study (Part II), and the valid recommendations of the Visiting Team and the Commission. The Commission on Independent Schools oversees the entire process.

Each school is evaluated in terms of compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation*, the quality of *Part II: Reflection, Recommendations, and Issues for Further Discussion*, and how well it is serving the needs of its students. Because each school is different, the base that undergirds the evaluation is the school's own statement of mission and core values.

# School Data Sheet

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## Mission

### Mission Statement

The mission of Saint Joseph Regional School is empowering students to grow as informed, inspired, compassionate souls.

We believe in Catholic Education that is centered in the Spirit of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

We believe that our heritage in the Monadnock region gives us a faith-filled view of our school, of life, and of our mission.

We believe that together, the Saint Joseph Regional School and Our Lady of Mercy Academy communities of parents, students, and teachers share a common vision---one formed by the compassionate message of the Gospel. **We affirm the values of high academic standards, responsibility, service, community, and worship.**

Because of our belief in **high academic standards**, we teach for a mastery of the basic learning skills by challenging students to use and develop their talents to the fullest.

Because of our belief in **responsibility**, we encourage our students to work both independently and cooperatively with others in a respectful manner.

Because of our belief in **service**, we teach our students to be aware of the needs of others and to reach out and help them.

Because of our belief in **community**, we choose to be a compassionate people who care for one another and to create a family atmosphere in our school.

Because of our belief in **worship**, we celebrate our personal commitment to Jesus Christ in prayer, in song, in liturgies, in the sacraments, and in religious instruction.

Realizing the beauty of our God-given identity, relatedness and purpose, we strive to form each student into a young adult, responding to those needs by being:

- A Hope-Filled Person
- A Person Who Emulates Christ's Love to All People
- A Whole Person
- A Responsible Person
- An Enthusiastic Person
- A Wise Person
- A Compassionate Person

## History and Culture

During the late 1880s, the Council of American Bishops arrived at the conclusion that the religious education of children was the joint responsibility of parents and the church. They recommended that all Catholic parishes establish parochial schools. Founded in 1886 by Saint Bernard Parish, the first students, grades 1-8, were welcomed by the Sisters of Mercy who served as staff until 1975 when the Sisters left instruction of the school to the laity, and Saint Joseph's became a regional Catholic school. For over 130 years, Saint Joseph Regional School has been welcoming families of all faiths from the greater Keene, New Hampshire, area.

For many years, there have been discussions about creating a Catholic high school in Keene. In 2016 a committed group of parents and educators came together to create what would become Our Lady of Mercy Academy, an extension of Saint Joseph Regional School. Our inaugural year started September 14, 2020, with grades 9 and 10. By school year 2022-23, we will have grades 9-12.

Our entire PreK-Grade 12 operates as one cohesive entity. There is one mission statement, all finances are integrated, faculty members cross over, and the administration and leadership are one. The two names of the schools are used primarily for marketing purposes and to represent a clear progression from elementary/middle school to high school for the students. The high school is also physically located within a different building on our campus, creating a distinction for students.

Keene is rural and somewhat isolated in the southwestern region of the state, distant from the higher population centers and other Catholic schools of the seacoast and eastern part of New Hampshire. Our school community draws from a wide geographic area including over 30 towns. Because of this, we have created a very strong identity in the area, and a resilient and self-reliant culture. Our staff, faculty, families and students work together passionately to preserve and grow our school community.

## **Overview of School Findings: Foundation Standards**

St. Joseph Regional School's strong history and tradition is alive and experienced daily in all that we do. For over 130 years, our Pre-K through Grade 8 community, joined now by our high school, has been the heart of Catholic educational excellence in southwest New Hampshire. Our students, their families, our faculty and staff all come together at our school united by one principle – our mission. As we embarked for the first time on the accreditation process and our Self-Study Report, we knew that it would be a great challenge for us. Our Self-Study process has been a powerful lesson in self-awareness for our small school community. We know we have many strengths, but we also recognize our weaknesses and seek to address them. We stand together committed to our students, and to the continued growth and advancement of our school.

The unified and compassionate mission of St. Joseph Regional School and Our Lady of Mercy Academy is truly at the center and the forefront of everything we do. Our faculty and staff have dedicated themselves to educating the whole child in body, mind, and soul, and it is beautiful to see this mission as a living and growing example in our students and their families. Each faculty member, parent, staff member, board member, grandparent and benefactor is committed to embracing each student's unique path toward God and their academic and social growth in a positive and nurturing environment. Understanding and living our mission is an essential strength of our faculty and community of students at both of our schools. Our two schools radiate an energetic and vibrant atmosphere that envelopes each child in a healthy, safe, and well-organized academic and faith-filled setting.

While we have certainly found reasons to rejoice over our progress and accomplishments that we discovered throughout our Self-Study, there are definite areas that could use improvement and other opportunities to enhance our successes. We look forward to strategically planning ways to shore up our weaknesses, mitigating risks, and organizing our procedures where coordination is lacking.

## **Overview of School Findings: Program and Strategic Planning Standards.**

St. Joseph Regional School's strong history and tradition is alive and experienced daily in all that we do. For over 130 years, our PreK through Grade 8 community, joined now by our high school, has been the heart of Catholic educational excellence in southwest New Hampshire. Our students, their families, our faculty and staff all come together at our school united by one principle – our mission. As we embarked for the first time on the accreditation process and our Self-Study Report, we knew that it would be a great challenge for us. Our Self-Study process has been a powerful lesson in self-awareness for our small school community. We know we have many strengths, but we also recognize our weaknesses and seek to address them. We stand together committed

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## Legal/Regulatory Documentation

Saint Joseph Regional School and Our Lady of Mercy Academy admit students of any gender, race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

### Related Files set 1 of 4

- [2021\\_05\\_25-09\\_40\\_Group Ruling - 2018 Memo FINAL 1.pdf](#)
- [2021\\_05\\_25-09\\_40\\_2018 IRS Determination Letter CURRENT 3.pdf](#)
- [2021\\_05\\_25-09\\_40\\_Diocese of Manchester 2018 OCD Listing.pdf](#)
- [2022\\_02\\_14-10\\_49\\_Food Service 2022 SJRS.jpg](#)
- [2022\\_02\\_14-10\\_56\\_sjrsolma health inspection-02092022115257.pdf](#)
- [2022\\_02\\_14-10\\_56\\_Fire Inspection Both buildings.pdf](#)
- [2022\\_02\\_14-10\\_57\\_Fire Annex - OLMA - Keene.docx](#)
- [2022\\_02\\_14-10\\_57\\_Internal Hazardous Materials Release Annex - OLMA - Keene.docx](#)
- [2022\\_02\\_14-10\\_57\\_Internal Hazardous Materials Release Annex - Final OLMA.docx](#)
- [2022\\_02\\_14-10\\_57\\_Medical Emergencies Annex - Final OLMA.docx](#)
- [2022\\_02\\_14-10\\_57\\_Flood Annex - OLMA - Keene.docx](#)
- [2022\\_02\\_14-10\\_57\\_OLMA Memo of Understanding.docx](#)
- [2022\\_02\\_14-10\\_57\\_NH Seven Response Actions - Final OLMA.doc](#)
- [2022\\_02\\_14-10\\_57\\_Parent-Child Reunification Form OLMA.docx](#)
- [2022\\_02\\_14-10\\_57\\_Medical Emergencies Annex - OLMA - Keene.docx](#)

### Related Files set 2 of 4

- [2022\\_02\\_14-10\\_57\\_Reunification - Parent Intake -OLMA.docx](#)
- [2022\\_02\\_14-10\\_57\\_Wildfire Hazard Annex Final OLMA.docx](#)
- [2022\\_02\\_14-10\\_57\\_Sample Safe School Zones MOU OLMA.docx](#)
- [2022\\_02\\_14-10\\_57\\_Reunification Plan OLMA.docx](#)
- [2022\\_02\\_14-10\\_57\\_Tornadoes Annex - OLMA - Keene.docx](#)
- [2022\\_02\\_14-10\\_57\\_Wildfire Hazard Annex -OLMA - Keene.docx](#)
- [2022\\_02\\_14-10\\_57\\_Tornadoes Annex - Final OLMA.docx](#)
- [2022\\_02\\_14-10\\_57\\_School EOP OLMA - Keene.docx](#)

- [2022 02 14-10 58 EOP 2017 SJRS.docx](#)
- [2022 02 14-10 58 Flood Annex - Final.docx](#)
- [2022 02 14-10 58 Flood Annex - SJRS - Keene.docx](#)
- [2022 02 14-10 58 Fire Annex - SJRS - Keene.docx](#)
- [2022 02 14-10 58 Internal Hazardous Materials Release Annex - SJRS - Keene.docx](#)
- [2022 02 14-10 58 NH Seven Response Actions - Final.doc](#)
- [2022 02 14-10 58 Medical Emergencies Annex - Final.docx](#)

#### Related Files set 3 of 4

- [2022 02 14-10 58 RSA 189-64.pdf](#)
- [2022 02 14-10 58 Medical Emergencies Annex - SJRS - Keene.docx](#)
- [2022 02 14-10 58 Parent-Child Reunification Form.docx](#)
- [2022 02 14-10 58 SJRS Memo of Understanding.docx](#)
- [2022 02 14-10 58 School EOP SJRS - Keene.docx](#)
- [2022 02 14-10 58 Tornadoes Annex - Final.docx](#)
- [2022 02 14-10 58 Tornadoes Annex - SJRS - Keene.docx](#)
- [2022 02 14-10 58 Reunification Plan.docx](#)
- [2022 02 14-10 58 Wildfire Hazard Annex -SJRS - Keene.docx](#)
- [2022 02 14-10 58 School EOP Template HSEM\\_FINAL\\_21 Mar 2017.docx](#)
- [2022 02 14-10 58 School EOP Template HSEM\\_FINAL\\_21 Mar 2017 OLMA.docx](#)
- [2022 02 14-11 46 NHDOE-Attendance Approval - OLMA.JPG](#)
- [2022 02 14-11 49 DOE Report AA SJRS.jpg](#)
- [2022 07 06-16 00 fire permits-07062022115634.pdf](#)
- [2022 07 06-16 00 asbestos neasc-05312022122551.pdf](#)

#### Related Files set 4 of 4

- [2022 10 21-09 02 fire confirm-10182022125628.pdf](#)
- [2022 10 21-09 02 199343 St Joseph Keene 3 Year Rpt.pdf](#)

## Survey Results

Please see the attached documents.

#### Related Files

- [2022 01 20-13 06 NEASC CIS Faculty Survey-Saint Joseph Regional School-Our Lady of Mercy Academy.csv](#)
- [2022 01 20-13 06 NEASC CIS Family Survey-Saint Joseph Regional School-Our Lady of Mercy Academy.csv](#)
- [2022 01 20-13 06 NEASC CIS General Student Survey-Saint Joseph Regional School-Our Lady of Mercy Academy.csv](#)
- [2022 01 20-13 06 NEASC CIS HS Student Survey-Saint Joseph Regional School-Our Lady of Mercy Academy.csv](#)

# **Introduction and Overview of Team Findings**

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## **Thanks to School**

**To be completed at the conclusion of the Program Visit.**

The Visiting Committee thanks the students, staff, families, and board members for their welcoming hospitality to Saint Joseph Regional School/Our Lady of Mercy Academy and the Keene, NH community. The hotel accommodations and meal planning more than met the group's needs and everyone appreciated the beauty of the area during a beautiful Fall season. The student body at SJRS and OLMA were also very welcoming with ready smiles and greetings. The student interviews in both buildings were helpful and taken seriously by the students. The Visiting Committee thoroughly enjoyed meeting and talking with the faculty, staff, parents and Board members. Fr. Alan seems like a wonderful and supportive figure for the school and the Visiting Committee wishes everyone well and a wonderful pilgrimage to Italy.

## **Overview of Team Findings - Foundation Visit**

**To be completed at the conclusion of the Foundation Visit.**

The Chair and Vice Chair want to thank the Administration including the members of the Administrative team and the School Board for a very informative visit. The school was well-prepared for the visit having completed a thorough Foundation Report.

Since this was the first time the school had undergone the accreditation process, there was bound to be some nerves heading into the visit. However, the school responded well to the needs of the Visiting Committee to inspect all aspects of the school and ask many probing questions.

The school is to be commended for its response to the early, important recommendations of the Visiting Committee and the positive results of that response are evident in the final Visiting Committee Report.

## **Overview of Team Findings - Program Visit**

**To be completed at the conclusion of the Program Visit.**

The Visiting Committee encountered an engaging and inviting school community at Saint Joseph Regional School/Our Lady of Mercy Academy. Under the school's principal and his leadership, the school has not only become sustainable but expanded with a high school. Through meetings with various constituents, the Visiting Committee found that all school leaders are committed to Catholic education and the long-term success of the school.

The school has positioned itself as a valuable and contributing member of the social fabric of the Keene, NH community. A vigorous engagement of its internal constituencies of students, parents, and staff through highly effective communication strategies mark community engagement and the successful promotion of the school's mission.



School administration has taken a prudent approach in building greater staffing capacity in meeting the students' educational needs. Both an augmentation of administrative and professional staff alike help carry out the tremendous tasks of securing the existence of SJRS/OLMA. School growth is outstanding and is to be praised in creating a vibrant school community and a powerful faith witness.

With growth comes challenges and opportunities. The school is embarking on a comprehensive and formalized strategic plan for the first time. When completed, this effort will provide a much needed institutional roadmap for school governance to support - and for school leadership to execute. It will likewise establish clear domains of shared responsibility between the Board, school leadership, and the Diocese of Manchester – all important stakeholders in the long-term success of the school.

Amid this enrollment growth and strategic planning, the evolving needs of students and staff alike will need ongoing nurturing and care. The school is well-positioned to do so. Coordinated and school-wide professional development in the area of social emotional learning will offer further gains in promoting the mission-centric compassion espoused by the school.

# Foundation Standard 1

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## Standard

**Enrolled Students Align Appropriately with the Mission**

## School's Rating

**Standard Met (SM1, SM2): The students' experience is supported.**

**Standard Unmet (SU1, SU2): The students' experience is compromised.**

SM2. Standard Met: Evidences understanding, evolving implementation and planning for improvement.

## Visiting Team's Rating

**Standard Met (SM1, SM2): The students' experience is supported.**

**Standard Unmet (SU1, SU2): The students' experience is compromised.**

SM2. Standard Met: Evidences understanding, evolving implementation and planning for improvement.

## Explanation of Rating

The Visiting Committee agrees with the school's rating of SM2. As the high school reaches capacity and future applicants exceed available seats, it will be necessary to refine the admissions process and consider an enrollment committee that includes faculty representation. As SJRS/OLMA establishes itself and evolves as a PreK - grade 12 Catholic school, the routine and intentional practice of evaluating the Mission Statement and aligning institutional strategic goals will be of critical importance.

## Observations and Conclusions

Saint Joseph Regional School/Our Lady of Mercy Academy (SJRS/OLMA) has a concise mission statement further explained by a philosophy and a statement of values. This strategic language describes how the School's beliefs inform action. In some ways, the value statements can be seen as a vision of the graduate. Through meetings with various constituents, the Visiting Committee found that all school leaders are committed to Catholic education and the success of the School. However, the Visiting Committee noted that the only reference to the School's Catholic identity in the language of the Mission Statement is the word "soul".

The Visiting Committee heard about the newly formed Catholic Identity Formation Team (CIFT), comprised of teachers, parents, pastor, and principal. The existence of this team demonstrates the School's aspirations to preserve and strengthen its Catholic identity. Although not a parish school, Father Alan Tremblay (pastor of neighboring Holy Spirit Parish) serves as a spiritual leader for the community and is an advocate for the School.

Enrollment is growing, preschool-grade 12. The total enrollment for the 2022-2023 school year is 285, up from 242. Given the rising middle school students from SJRS and the strong retention rates, OLMA expects to quickly reach a point where there are limited openings for families new to the community.

For the 2022-23 school year, the school has hired an Admissions Coordinator and a Special Education Case Manager. In addition, the school provides academic support to students who need it.

The School self-identified a challenge as clarification of the role of teachers in the admissions process. Presently, all applicants for grades 1-11 are expected to spend a day shadowing at the School. Faculty are offered the opportunity to provide feedback. Still, there is no set template or expectation for the input, and there are no specific assessments that the faculty are expected to conduct. Now that an Admissions Coordinator has been hired, further review of the enrollment process and teachers' role in it is under consideration.

## **Commendations**

1. The Visiting Committee commends Saint Joseph Regional School and Our Lady of Mercy Academy for analyzing demographic trends in New Hampshire to better understand enrollment potential.
2. The Visiting Committee commends Saint Joseph Regional School for its steady increase in enrollment over the past eight years.
3. The Visiting Committee commends the School for its establishment of CIFT and Father Alan's dedication to the School's Catholic mission.
4. The Visiting Committee commends the school for its efforts to provide academic support to students who need it and for hiring a Special Education Case Manager to help evaluate records of students who apply for admission.
5. The Visiting Committee commends the school's action to add a dedicated Admissions Coordinator to the staff.

## **Recommendation 1**

The Visiting Committee recommends that SJRS/OLMA review its mission statement and all strategic language to ensure that it genuinely reflects the school's Catholic identity as an emerging PreK-12 school community.

## **Recommendation 2**

The Visiting Committee recommends that the school continue to codify and document the admissions procedures for all grade levels.

## **Recommendation 3**

The Visiting Committee recommends that the faculty's role in the admissions process be clarified, documented, and more broadly communicated.

## **Recommendation 4**

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# Foundation Standard 2

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## Standard

**The Governing Body/Board Assures the School Remains Sustainable and True to its Mission**

## School's Rating

**Standard Met (SM1, SM2): The students' experience is supported.**

**Standard Unmet (SU1, SU2): The students' experience is compromised.**

SM2. Standard Met: Evidences understanding, evolving implementation and planning for improvement.

## Visiting Team's Rating

**Standard Met (SM1, SM2): The students' experience is supported.**

**Standard Unmet (SU1, SU2): The students' experience is compromised.**

SM2. Standard Met: Evidences understanding, evolving implementation and planning for improvement.

## Explanation of Rating

The Visiting Committee concurs with the School's self-rating of SM2, finding evidence of understanding, evolving implementation and planning for improvement.

## Observations and Conclusions

The school has reconstituted its Board, and the Board is in its first full year of functioning. The Chair and other members seem dedicated to the school and also to setting up and having the Board function in line with best practices for Catholic School Boards. The school possesses a draft Strategic Plan and is in the formulation process of plan implementation.

Concerning the Board and its responsibilities, the School has made a significant effort to re-establish the Board following the worst of the pandemic. The Board Chair is 100% vested in making the Board a success and ensuring the future of the School. The Board is looking forward to comments and recommendations from the accreditation process to move them forward in the right direction.

According to the By-Laws of the School Board as promulgated by the Diocese of Manchester, this Board is called an "Advisory Board." However, the Board is consultative in nature rather than advisory. As per the Board's By-Laws, "Consultation implies that the administrator(s) will listen to the advice of the properly convened body in certain designated matters before a decision is made. The operating principle is that the administrator(s) will not act contrary to the advice that has been given, especially when there is a consensus, unless the administrator(s) has an overriding reason. It is customary for the administrator(s) to communicate this reason to the consultative body." This inconsistent application of governance nomenclature requires clarification.

The Board has established leadership roles, and the Chair understands that leadership transition will be

important moving forward. The Board is establishing a full committee structure.

The Board is aware that diversity in its membership is essential and will continue to keep the issue at the forefront moving forward. The School and Board seem dedicated to continually seeking to strengthen its alignment with this Standard. From everything that the administration and the Board are doing, it also appears that there is a dedication to the School's Catholic identity.

## **Commendations**

1. The Visiting Committee commends the School for re-establishing a Board comprised of interested and committed members with strong leadership.
2. The Visiting Committee commends the Board leadership for its dedication to the long-term interests of the School.

## **Recommendation 1**

The Visiting committee recommends that the Board and the School come to a thorough understanding of the expectations of the Board and the relationship of the Board and the School to the Diocese.

## **Recommendation 2**

The Visiting Committee recommends that the School Board establish and follow membership guidelines as stated in the By-Laws.

## **Recommendation 3**

The Visiting Committee recommends that the School Board establish a committee structure that will support the newly formulated Strategic Plan and the attendant processes of institutional strategic implementation.

## **Recommendation 4**

The Visiting Committee recommends that the Board complete the process of writing a Strategic Plan as soon as possible.

# Foundation Standard 3

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## Standard

**The School's Resources Sufficiently Support Present and Prospective Operation**

## School's Rating

**Standard Met (SM1, SM2): The students' experience is supported.**

**Standard Unmet (SU1, SU2): The students' experience is compromised.**

SM2. Standard Met: Evidences understanding, evolving implementation and planning for improvement.

## Visiting Team's Rating

**Standard Met (SM1, SM2): The students' experience is supported.**

**Standard Unmet (SU1, SU2): The students' experience is compromised.**

SM2. Standard Met: Evidences understanding, evolving implementation and planning for improvement.

## Explanation of Rating

The Visiting Committee agrees with the school's self-rating of SM2. Saint Joseph Regional School/Our Lady of Mercy Academy has the resources to support present and prospective operations. The school stakeholders understand and engage in improvement planning, which supports the students' experience while also recognizing the importance of prioritizing the formulation and promulgation of long-term plans in the critical financial and facility planning areas.

## Observations and Conclusions

Saint Joseph Regional School and Our Lady of Mercy Academy's resources sufficiently support its current operation. The Visiting Committee heard from the administration team about planning for several changes to ancillary and supplemental revenue activities as school operations expand across all grade levels.

The school reports that as its trend of 5% minimum annual increases in enrollment continues, the demands of such growth on an aged physical plant also increase. For fifty years, little was done to keep the school buildings up to date (excluding window and door replacement in the early 2000s). This prolonged period of deferred maintenance ended when the current Principal was appointed some eight years ago. Since then, a more proactive approach to facilities management has been employed at the school level. For example, fire prevention equipment (sprinkler system) in the high school and campus-wide wireless network connectivity have made for important and recent improvements. The Project Manager for the schools knows the facilities well and was able to clearly articulate, and prioritize, the needed improvements.

Writing of itself, the school offers, "Our challenges rest solely within our facilities. We face multiple capital projects to create the atmosphere of safety and learning we desire in the next decade. Among these are new sprinklers at Our Lady (funded); a new fire panel at SJRS; an elevator at SJRS; a gym rehabilitation at SJRS;

high-speed internet installation at SJRS (funded); rehabilitation to the parking lot that both facilities share; and numerous others that have been recommended to us by our auditing engineers (Team Engineering), all of which create a more fiscally efficient facility, and more importantly, offer a more safe and welcoming environment in which to educate our students."

It was reported to the Visiting Committee that further capital improvements to the physical plant above \$10,000 would necessarily trigger ADA code compliance. More costly physical plant enhancements in the short term are necessarily tabled until a long-term strategic plan and a long-term facilities plan can be fashioned and matched with funding mechanisms.

In the absence of the aforementioned strategic documents, the Visiting Committee found an executive decision-making culture of mutual understanding among school-based leadership as advanced by the Principal's vision, which was generally healthy and positive - but understood mainly in an informal, anecdotal, and undocumented context.

Though multi-year forecasts were not readily available to the Visiting Committee, school administration represents that future budgetary and financial challenges revolve around the need to intelligently raise funds to accommodate a larger enrollment while allocating resources towards facility needs without hampering the school's ability to survive any unforeseen issues. Recent donor activity has presented the school with a favorable and unrestricted cash reserve. Still, active fundraising currently funds all necessary capital expenses. The school expects this practice to continue into the foreseeable future.

Writing of its strengths, the school offers, "One of our significant strengths is the steady increase of our enrollment. This has allowed us to forecast our tuition revenue to within 4% of actual gross revenue. This, in turn, has allowed us to be very vigilant on the expense side of things. This near-constant in the budget process has given us firm ground from which to make staffing, supply, and even infrastructure decisions without fear of an unknown. Another significant strength lies within our new advancement practices. More than \$900,000 has been generated in the last 18 months in major gifts. Postings for the prior 18 months do not total six figures. As such, this activity has been the driving force behind the development of our high school."

Also noteworthy are parent and staff survey results in the area of long-term viability. The results convey confidence in the school's future, with 100% of staff and parent respondents affirming the statement, "I am confident in the long term viability of the school." Undoubtedly, this shared sentiment of enthusiasm among school community members has been a driving force behind successive years of growing enrollment.

## **Commendations**

1. The Visiting Committee commends the principal for his outstanding dedication and service to the school. Under his leadership the school has not only become sustainable but expanded with a high school.
2. The Visiting Committee commends the school community for creating an inspiring sense of confidence in the school's future among both internal stakeholders and the outside community.
3. The Visiting Committee commends the school administration for taking a sober assessment of present facility conditions and aligning needs with accessible resources.
4. The Visiting Committee commends the school for addressing several facility issues very recently, in particular, rehabilitating the common parking lot and working with the parish to relocate parish offices out of the Mercy Academy building to allow for added classroom space.

## **Recommendation 1**

The Visiting Committee recommends that the school align its future aspirations alongside a comprehensive, long-

term strategic plan in support of the students' experience.

## **Recommendation 2**

The Visiting Committee recommends that the school continue to develop long-term budget modeling in reliably forecasting fiscal stability.



# Foundation Standard 4

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## Standard

**The School Assures that the Adult Community is Qualified and Organized to Implement the Mission**

## School's Rating

**Standard Met (SM1, SM2): The students' experience is supported.**

**Standard Unmet (SU1, SU2): The students' experience is compromised.**

SM2. Standard Met: Evidences understanding, evolving implementation and planning for improvement.

## Visiting Team's Rating

**Standard Met (SM1, SM2): The students' experience is supported.**

**Standard Unmet (SU1, SU2): The students' experience is compromised.**

SM2. Standard Met: Evidences understanding, evolving implementation and planning for improvement.

## Explanation of Rating

The Visiting Committee agrees with the school's self-rating of SM2. School stakeholders understand their obligation to assure that the adult community is qualified and organized to implement the mission while also identifying measures to address areas for improvement in human resource management.

## Observations and Conclusions

Saint Joseph Regional School and Our Lady of Mercy Academy sufficiently understand their obligation to appoint qualified staff members in serving the school's mission. Current hiring outcomes speak well of the administration's general success in this area. All classroom teachers are currently licensed or are obtaining their licenses and having secondary degrees. Of particular note is the average length of service among the faculty. Teachers average 13.5 years of teaching experience and have spent more than six years at SJRS/OLMA. The school possesses a veteran and practiced staff.

The school attributes the primary reason for this service time to hiring qualified staff from within the pool of past and current students' parents. The school offers that past experience indicates these adults are already invested in the programs at SJRS and OLMA and have a longer tenure than those persons who apply from the population at large. In the Staff Survey, 100% of the faculty and staff affirmed that its mission accurately reflects the school as it currently operates and that its mission guides decision-making – a particular strength in this area of school life.

Likewise, the school has identified significant areas of improvement to be addressed regarding human resource management, supervision, and evaluation. The school notes itself, "The challenge with this portion of the standard is in its systematic maintenance. In other words, what internal checks and balances (other than the diocesan requirements) can be implemented to assure that no staff member slips through the cracks? We do not

have a dedicated Human Resources Manager at our location, and we rely on the Diocese of Manchester for this support. To strengthen our alignment with this Standard, we will be officially designating a staff member to be the human resources liaison with the Diocese.”

The staff desires an improvement in this area of human resource management. While 100% of the faculty and staff respondents answered positively to the statement, "I trust the school leadership is operating in the best interest of the students," only 64% responded positively to the statement, "The professional evaluation process is clearly outlined and understood." Only 71% believe that professional development is a priority at the school. Most importantly, only 68% believe that internal communication at the school is "...timely, clear and effective."

As with other areas of school life, the Visiting Committee found an otherwise positive and shared notion of meaning among community members about this Standard, but also one that relies heavily on anecdotal and verbal communication.

## **Commendations**

1. The Visiting Committee commends the school for its efforts to secure a competent and engaged staff in serving the mission of Saint Joseph Regional School and Our Lady of Mercy Academy.
2. The Visiting Committee commends the school for laying the groundwork to improve upon present human resource management responsibilities, especially in the areas of observation, evaluation, and supervision.

## **Recommendation 1**

The Visiting Committee recommends that the school continue to implement a formalized process of evaluation, observation, and supervision which aligns with its vision statement for faculty and staff formation.

## **Recommendation 2**

# Foundation Standard 5

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## Standard

**A Proactive Culture of Health and Safety Permeates the School**

## School's Rating

**Standard Met (SM1, SM2): The students' experience is supported.**

**Standard Unmet (SU1, SU2): The students' experience is compromised.**

SM2. Standard Met: Evidences understanding, evolving implementation and planning for improvement.

## Visiting Team's Rating

**Standard Met (SM1, SM2): The students' experience is supported.**

**Standard Unmet (SU1, SU2): The students' experience is compromised.**

SM2. Standard Met: Evidences understanding, evolving implementation and planning for improvement.

## Explanation of Rating

The Visiting Committee agrees with the school's rating of SM2. The Visiting Committee found a culture at SJRS/OLMA that cares deeply about the students and is intentional about the health and safety of the community.

## Observations and Conclusions

The school has done things in the recent past and present to assure the health and safety of all in the building, not the least of which has been safety during the recent pandemic. The school policies and procedures in place throughout the pandemic served both the adult and student populations well.

The school has seen remarkable growth in the last several years growing from 89 students in preschool to grade 8 to over 200, not including the high school students. The school is fortunate to have a part time on site nurse who is also available on-call. Recently, a Health Suite was refurbished to allow for privacy for those who are ill and need to wait for a ride to go home. The office staff in both school buildings triage students but with the assistance of the nurse either by phone or in person. Once certain issues of concern from a safety point of view were pointed out, the school acted on them and the school is the better for it.

The plan to establish a secure lobby for the SJRS building is ambitious, but ultimately necessary wherever it falls in the new Strategic Plan. In recent months the school was able to secure the high school building when the pastor and parish agreed to move parish offices out of the building and create a security door connecting the chapel to the high school. This also allowed for more classroom space for the high school.

Morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up are well organized and adequately supervised. The St. Joseph building is secured, with all exterior doors locked during the school day. Guests sign in at the front office and are given a guest badge to wear while in the building. The outdoor playground is fenced in.

The school provided the Visiting Committee with evidence of fire drills and lockdown drills. All required safety compliance documentation was provided to the Visiting Committee. The School administration has developed a positive relationship with the local fire and police departments and seeks their advice on safety issues. The School has a comprehensive emergency management plan; however the school should customize information and add any other pertinent details specific to the school's situation.

SJRS/OLMA attends to the social, emotional, and mental health of students. There is a school counselor who has addressed, among other topics, suicide prevention with the high school population.

## **Commendations**

1. The Visiting Committee commends the school for adding administrative staff to help carry out the tremendous tasks of securing the existence of SJRS/OLMA. The growth of both schools is outstanding and to be praised.
2. The Visiting Committee commends the school for working with local agencies to plan for facility improvements.

## **Recommendation 1**

The Visiting Committee agrees with the school's self-recommendation to address building security concerns, in particular establishing a secure lobby at SJRS.

## **Recommendation 2**

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## **Recommendation 3**

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## **Recommendation 4**

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# **Foundation Visit Key Recommendations**

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## **Key Recommendation 1**

The Visiting Committee recommends that the Board and the School come to a thorough understanding of the expectations of the Board and the relationship of the Board and the School to the Diocese.

## **Key Recommendation 2**

The Visiting Committee recommends that the school align its future aspirations alongside a comprehensive, long-term strategic plan in support of the students' experience.

## **Key Recommendation 3**

The Visiting Committee recommends that SJRS/OLMA review its mission statement and all strategic language to ensure that it genuinely reflects the school's Catholic identity as an emerging PreK-12 school community.

# Program Standard 7

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## Standard

**Commitment to Mission and Core Beliefs Informs Decisions, Guides Initiatives and Aligns with the Students' Needs and Aspirations**

## School's Rating

**Standard Met (SM1, SM2): The students' experience is supported.**

**Standard Unmet (SU1, SU2): The students' experience is compromised.**

SM1. Standard Met: Evidences clear understanding, effective implementation and thorough planning for further improvement.

## Visiting Team's Rating

**Standard Met (SM1, SM2): The students' experience is supported.**

**Standard Unmet (SU1, SU2): The students' experience is compromised.**

SM1. Standard Met: Evidences clear understanding, effective implementation and thorough planning for further improvement.

## Explanation of Rating

The Visiting Committee agrees with the school's self rating of SM1 with clear understanding, effective implementation and thorough planning for further improvement of the mission.

## Observations and Conclusions

Conversations with administrators, alumni, students and staff interviews reflected a purposeful, mission centric environment. Not only is the mission statement posted throughout the school, but it is lived.

Students who attend SJRS and OLMA not only receive an education that establishes content mastery, but teaches morality and public outreach.

The Good Samaritan Award is given out quarterly to students who have been recognized by staff as living the mission and philosophy of SJRS and OLMA.

With the creation of CIFT (Catholic Identity Formation Team), the school is seeking to ensure the lived expression of the mission and the philosophy that are the foundation of the school.

The Visiting Committee observed the efforts of the teachers to implement the Diocesan Catholic Integrated Faith Initiative.

Since 2014, enrollment has increased from 89 students to 282. The consensus of those interviewed feel the daily implementation of the Mission Statement

has driven enrollment which will only be enhanced by the newly appointed Director of Admissions.

## **Commendations**

1. The Visiting Committee commends the school's mission driven enrollment growth resulting in significant increase in enrollment at the elementary and high school level in the last several years
2. The Visiting Committee commends the school for regularly recognizing students of all ages for outwardly demonstrating the mission through the Good Samaritan Award.
3. The Visiting Committee commends the school for having the Kiwanis Builders Club at the middle school level and establishing the Mercy Project at the high school and to demonstrate the mission statement and philosophy and values of the school.
4. The Visiting Committee commends the school for establishing the CIFT committee to ensure that the school is true to its mission.

## **Recommendation 1**

The Visiting Committee recommends that the school clearly identify its mission in unison with its stated underlying philosophy for all prospective families.

## **Recommendation 2**

The Visiting Committee agrees with the school's recommendation that the mission be portrayed clearly and consistently through the newly established Director of Admissions position.

## **Recommendation 3**

The Visiting Committee recommends that the school continue to provide professional development to the teachers regarding the Diocesan approved Catholic Integrated Faith Initiative.

## **Recommendation 4**

N/A

# Program Standard 8

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## Standard

**Commitment to Inspiration and Support Characterizes the Approach to Each Student**

## School's Rating

**Standard Met (SM1, SM2): The students' experience is supported.**

**Standard Unmet (SU1, SU2): The students' experience is compromised.**

SM2. Standard Met: Evidences understanding, evolving implementation and planning for improvement.

## Visiting Team's Rating

**Standard Met (SM1, SM2): The students' experience is supported.**

**Standard Unmet (SU1, SU2): The students' experience is compromised.**

SM2. Standard Met: Evidences understanding, evolving implementation and planning for improvement.

## Explanation of Rating

The Visiting Committee agrees with the school's rating of SM2. Students are supported in and out of the classroom and encouraged to develop independence and leadership skills. Ongoing goals have been identified, such as supporting SEL and DEI initiatives.

## Observations and Conclusions

It was evident in observations and interviews that students, age three through high school, at SJRS and OLMA were supported in their academic and social development. In kindergarten students started the day by greeting each other and sharing about their weekend and across the parking lot the high school students had their first student council meeting. Students are given the opportunity to participate in and suggest new after school clubs.

Classroom observations showed a variety of class sizes, some as small as two students and others as large as 33. Larger classes, especially in the early elementary grades had a classroom aide. An Academic Support Specialist works with students in and out of the classroom.

Supports are in place to encourage students to take responsibility for their learning and develop leadership skills. By learning how to use a planner and be organized in managing their academic materials, middle school students are given the tools and support needed to be organized and successful. In a conversation with middle school students they took ownership and leadership through three organizations in which they could run for office: Student Council, Builders Club, and French Club. High school students have the opportunity to join a newly created Student Council and propose new after school activities to the administration.

In the interview with a Lead Teacher and Dean of Students it was shared how students are supported by additional teacher aides, a Special Education Case Manager, Academic Support Specialist, and a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (1-2 hours/week). These newly created positions are benefitting students and the connections among them are still evolving. While there was a solid procedure for behavioral and academic



detentions in middle school, there was not a documented procedure for discipline for students in grade 4 and below. If a student struggles academically (in reading) in grades 4 and below, after a meeting with the teacher/administration, the student is required to read at home with the parent/guardian. In high school, behavior concerns are handled by the Dean of Students. Privileges, such as lunch off campus, are lost if students do not maintain a 3.2 GPA.

In an interview with the Dean of Students for the high school the question arose about the implementation of social emotional learning skills. While some teachers have introduced SEL skills, there is not a formal program or scope of lessons from grade to grade. With regards to diversity, it was noted in the self-study and in interviews that there is a budget for resources related to diversity. The school is planning on purchasing materials to be more representative of different cultures. It was noted in the self-study and in interviews that especially because the rural New Hampshire community is not very diverse, it is important for students to have the opportunity to be exposed to diversity in many forms.

The school acknowledges and celebrates its Catholic faith. Students attend Mass weekly, and Catholicity is integrated into the life of the school. While not all students are Catholic, all students are welcomed and there are opportunities for those who want to join the Catholic faith to do so.

## **Commendations**

1. The Visiting Committee commends the school for the addition of additional positions, including early childhood and early elementary teacher aides, a Special Education Case Manager, and support from a LCSW 1-2 hours per week.
2. The Visiting Committee commends the school for giving students the opportunity to gain independence and leadership skills from an early age.
3. The Visiting Committee commends the school for integrating opportunities for students to strengthen their faith in lessons in and out of religion classes, as well as attending Mass weekly.

## **Recommendation 1**

The Visiting Committee supports the school's recommendation for additional, coordinated and school-wide professional development on the topic of social emotional learning. In addition, the need arose for continuity between grade levels or a more formalized SEL program.

## **Recommendation 2**

The Visiting Committee recommends the addition of hours to the schedule for the Licensed Clinical Social Worker, in order to create the time for additional services for students and consultation for staff.

## **Recommendation 3**

The Visiting Committee supports the school's recommendation to solidify the Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee.

# Program Standard 9

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## Standard

**Commitment to Excellence Distinguishes the Program**

## School's Rating

**Standard Met (SM1, SM2): The students' experience is supported.**

**Standard Unmet (SU1, SU2): The students' experience is compromised.**

SM2. Standard Met: Evidences understanding, evolving implementation and planning for improvement.

## Visiting Team's Rating

**Standard Met (SM1, SM2): The students' experience is supported.**

**Standard Unmet (SU1, SU2): The students' experience is compromised.**

SM2. Standard Met: Evidences understanding, evolving implementation and planning for improvement.

## Explanation of Rating

The Visiting Committee agrees with the school's self ranking of SM2. All indicators were met with evidence of understanding, evolving implementation and planning for improvement.

## Observations and Conclusions

There are many areas where the school promotes program excellence. The Principal focuses on making sure that the students are being challenged with the curriculum and in the middle school there is opportunity for the students to progress to the next level in Math and Science if they qualify. After interviewing the Dean of Students, it was noted that the teachers get together to plan curriculum and this summer they met several times to make sure their curriculum is aligning with other grades. In the High School there are opportunities for students to extend their learning with online courses that are not offered through the school. Teachers use summative assessment to determine leveled classes. The school uses data from NWEA to inform instruction. The school has shown growth in raw MAP Data.

After interviewing the students, there was discussion of the house point system and end of year awards. Students are also encouraged to maintain a 3.20 GPA in order for them to be able to leave school in grades 10-12 for off-campus privilege. This is a motivation for the students. The students also take an active role in Student Council and Builders Club. There is an approach for the school to promote program excellence.

Throughout the school the mission is placed in classrooms. When interviewing the Principal and Dean of Students, they discussed the importance of the mission of the school, the key word being compassion. Compassion can be seen in the integration of the high school students with the elementary students. Students attend Mass every Wednesday and the Juniors and Seniors are Mass buddies with the younger students. Students attend religion classes taught four times a week and attend Mass weekly. Prayer is said three times a

day, twice on the loudspeaker. The school aspires to launch a Catholic mentorship program for teachers, expanding upon the informal mentorship program that is already in place.

All students in grades 5-8 use Chromebooks and in 9-12 it is BYOD. There is technology in every classroom, and several of the classrooms have new smart boards. Students use Google Classroom and both students and parents have access to FACTS Student Information System. Some of the staff have started using Curriculum Trak and have started uploading unit plans and resources that follow the new standards implemented by the Diocese of Manchester.

Students are provided regular opportunities to participate in the sacrament of the Eucharist by attending weekly Mass and Adoration.

## **Commendations**

1. The Visiting Committee commends SJRS and OLMA for its commitment to excellence and how it distinguishes the program. There is clear evidence that curriculum and instruction are the core of SJRS and OLMA. There is clear evidence that there is student voice within the school.
2. The Visiting Committee commends SJRS and OLMA for making several opportunities available for students to receive help from their classroom teachers. SJRS and OLMA provide opportunities for student growth by providing Academic Support Staff and Flex Time.
3. The Visiting Committee commends SJRS and OLMA for providing opportunities to participate in religious programs and age-appropriate spiritual experiences to assist student growth.

## **Recommendation 1**

The Visiting Committee supports the school's recommendation that the school provide a Catholic teacher mentorship program for non-Catholic teachers.

## **Recommendation 2**

The Visiting Committee supports the school's recommendation that all staff upload units and resources into Curriculum Trak.

## **Recommendation 3**

The Visiting Committee supports the school's recommendation of the analysis of test scores and district assessments to better inform instruction and curriculum.

## **Recommendation 4**

The Visiting Committee supports the school's recommendation to integrate the newly published Diocese of Manchester's Pre-K-12 Curriculum Framework over the next three years.

# Program Standard 10

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## Standard

**Commitment to Continuous Professional Development Permeates the Adult Culture**

## School's Rating

**Standard Met (SM1, SM2): The students' experience is supported.**

**Standard Unmet (SU1, SU2): The students' experience is compromised.**

SM2. Standard Met: Evidences understanding, evolving implementation and planning for improvement.

## Visiting Team's Rating

**Standard Met (SM1, SM2): The students' experience is supported.**

**Standard Unmet (SU1, SU2): The students' experience is compromised.**

SM2. Standard Met: Evidences understanding, evolving implementation and planning for improvement.

## Explanation of Rating

The Visiting Committee agrees with the school's self rating of SM2 - Evidences understanding, evolving implementation and planning for improvement.

## Observations and Conclusions

Conversations and interviews with faculty members expressed SJRS and OLMA's involvement in providing professional development opportunities for their educators.

A professional development coordinator monitors each teacher's professional development hours throughout the academic year and assists with providing professional development opportunities. Numerous opportunities are provided throughout the school year by the Diocese of Manchester and SJRS/OLMA that highlight the educators' desire for growth and commitment to enhancing student learning.

Faculty members meet numerous times throughout the week to discuss "*specific grade level concerns, student needs, and school wide events or initiatives*".

New teachers are assigned a mentor that helps foster their developing teaching pedagogy.

Professional Development at SJRS/OLMA includes trainings such as Red Cross Certification, Suicide Prevention, and Google Classroom, along with Catholic Identity such as a retreat focused on Eucharistic Revival. Administration and faculty have participated in, and continue to participate in, NEASC visits to further a means to help reflect upon their own practices.

CIFT (Catholic Identity Formation Team) as well as members of administration actively serve to create programming and opportunities for professional development and overall Catholic Identity of the school.

Teachers are evaluated three times a year - twice by the principal - once by a peer. Evaluations are unannounced, as well as scheduled, and conclude with a follow-up by the principal. Teacher's set personal goals and aspirations to develop their best practices.

In the 2022-2023 school year, 100% of the faculty returned in spite of other trends in the area and state.

## **Commendations**

1. The Visiting Committee commends the school for a caring and compassionate culture for teachers and staff.
2. The Visiting Committee commends the school for having 100% staff retention for the 2022 - 2023 school year.
3. The Visiting Committee commends the school for giving the members of faculty the opportunity to be participants on NEASC visiting teams.

## **Recommendation 1**

The Visiting Committee supports the school's self-recommendation to start a mentorship program for new teachers.

## **Recommendation 2**

The Visiting Committee recommends that the school continues to promote Professional Development opportunities to all staff members.

## **Recommendation 3**

The Visiting Committee agrees with the school's self-recommendation for improving the professional evaluation process.

# Program Standard 11

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## Standard

**Commitment to Engaging with the Greater Community Enhances Student Experience**

## School's Rating

**Standard Met (SM1, SM2): The students' experience is supported.**

**Standard Unmet (SU1, SU2): The students' experience is compromised.**

SM2. Standard Met: Evidences understanding, evolving implementation and planning for improvement.

## Visiting Team's Rating

**Standard Met (SM1, SM2): The students' experience is supported.**

**Standard Unmet (SU1, SU2): The students' experience is compromised.**

SM1. Standard Met: Evidences clear understanding, effective implementation and thorough planning for further improvement.

## Explanation of Rating

The school self-rated Standard 11 as SM2. The visiting committee finds the school evidences a very clear understanding, highly effective implementation, and thorough planning for further improvement with respect to Standard 11. Hence, the visiting committee recommends an elevated rating of SM1.

## Observations and Conclusions

SJRS and OLMA presents as an active and engaged community from both an internal and external perspective. Writing for itself, the school recognizes "...that a successful education is made possible through an active partnership between the school, students, families, and the community." Such is clearly evident at SJRS and OLMA.

From an internal perspective, various information channels are incorporated into the overall stream of school communications. The school utilizes FACTS/SIS as its academic reporting platform which is live and viewable by students and parents.

Classroom newsletters, organized parent/teacher conferences, a weekly principal's newsletter, and a regularly maintained presence on social media including Facebook all make for multiple and successful communication touchpoints. In summary, the school reports that its fall 2021 Parent Survey results showed that over 95% of parents felt the school environment supported their child's social and emotional development and over 97% of parents felt that communication from the school was clear and effective – no doubt all good fruits of much thoughtful labor.

From an external perspective, the school endeavors to engage local cultural institutions as educational resources

within the larger Keene, NH landscape. Given the school's Main Street and downtown Keene campus, a natural geographic extension exists in making meaningful connections. The school holds its annual Christmas concert off-campus at a local performing arts theatre. Its spring concert is held at neighboring Keene State College. Business and corporate connections exist between the school and community organizations. The Kiwanis Builders Club, the Greater Keene-Peterborough Chamber of Commerce, and the New Hampshire Dance Institute partner with the school in creating impactful extracurricular opportunities for students outside the classroom.

The school also collaborates with its home parish, Holy Spirit Parish, whose pastor serves as the school's chaplain and the parish's pastoral associate serves as the school's campus minister. This parish relationship makes for a valuable network and faith-witness in maintaining generational ties with alumni students and families. In addition, the school has made meaningful connections with local Knights of Columbus councils and area non-profits in promoting charitable and external social support initiatives. Neighboring Keene State College has also been an important thought-partner and resource in working with school administration in offering consultation on technology integration and curriculum design, particularly in the expanding high school.

The school aspires to improve in the areas of alumni engagement through the development of an information database. At present, such an electronic platform as housed within an alumni/institutional advancement office is under consideration. With respect to broadening students' global perspective, the school reports that surveyed middle school students responded positively at 62% and only 56% at the high school level. Of note, both cohorts had high numbers of students who responded, "I don't know" to this question. The school's self-study comments, "We considered not knowing if the school encourages global thinking a negative indicator."

Responsive programming to this concern is evident in the newly created curricular program, *The Mercy Project*, which consists of required courses that survey principles of sociocultural relationships and how to identify unmet needs in a community. Students learn to describe models of local, national, and global service, and learn the psychosocial principles behind leadership, management, and organization. On this topic, the school concludes for itself that, "...it is clear from the survey results that there is work to be done to strengthen our commitment to broadening student's perspective of our global world."

## **Commendations**

1. The Visiting Committee commends the school for being a contributing member to the social fabric of the Keene, NH community.
2. The Visiting Committee commends the school for a robust and vigorous engagement of its internal constituencies of students, parents, and staff through highly effective communication strategies.
3. The Visiting Committee commends the school for an inclusive engagement of its external constituencies of generational alumni, parish supporters, and local institutional stakeholders in promoting the school's mission.

## **Recommendation 1**

The Visiting Committee recommends and supports the school's own resolve to pursue and codify curricular and extracurricular programming specifically designed to heighten student and staff consciousness of global and multicultural studies.

## **Recommendation 2**

The Visiting Committee recommends and supports the school's own resolve to establish and maintain an alumni electronic database in building greater capacity in the areas of communications and stakeholder engagement.

# Strategic Planning Standard 14

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## Standard

**Commitment to Long-Term Viability and Innovation Guides Planning**

## School's Rating

**Standard Met (SM1, SM2): The students' experience is supported.**

**Standard Unmet (SU1, SU2): The students' experience is compromised.**

SM2. Standard Met: Evidences understanding, evolving implementation and planning for improvement.

## Visiting Team's Rating

**Standard Met (SM1, SM2): The students' experience is supported.**

**Standard Unmet (SU1, SU2): The students' experience is compromised.**

SM2. Standard Met: Evidences understanding, evolving implementation and planning for improvement.

## Explanation of Rating

The Visiting Committee concurs with the school's rating of SM2. SJRS/OLMA has proven commitment to long-term viability with a focus on growth and physical and staff improvements to the elementary program and exemplified by the successful launch of a completely new high school option.

## Observations and Conclusions

The school clearly aspires and plans to strengthen its alignment with this Standard through its reformulated School Board. The Board is forming its committee structure and has begun by establishing a Finance Committee and by work as a committee of the whole on the first draft of the new Strategic Plan. There is no doubt that the school has the capacity, competence and commitment to effect its goals. In recent years, the school has been a beacon for families in the area who seek a solid education with faith and character building.

Moving forward, the school may face issues of full enrollment in both levels. The principal and pastor work diligently to balance the challenges of completing necessary repairs or capital projects with the need to sustain the finances of the school. This information is now being shared with the newly formed Finance committee of the School Board. In spite of the fact that the pandemic was in full force, the school carried on with its plan to open the high school in the fall of 2020. This was a great success and the high school has grown more quickly than anticipated.

The Visiting Committee noticed that, due to the close working relationship of the leadership team, there has been an emphasis on thinking and planning for the future. As a result of participating in the accreditation process, over the last 8 months, the Administration has been working with the School Board to create a specific, written Strategic Plan.



## **Commendations**

1. The Visiting Committee commends the school leadership for its clear and limitless dedication to the success of SJRS/OLMA.
2. The Visiting Committee commends the school for diligently following the steps in the accreditation process.
3. The Visiting Committee commends the school for celebrating the opening of the high school and for regularly celebrating its students with the Good Samaritan Awards.

## **Recommendation 1**

The Visiting Committee recommends that the school complete the detailed version of the Strategic Plan by January 2023.

## **Recommendation 2**

The Visiting Committee recommends that the school continue the development of the School Board and its committee structure.

# **Major Commendations and Recommendations**

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## **Major Commendations**

1. The Visiting Committee commends the principal for his outstanding dedication and service to the school. Under his leadership the school has not only become sustainable but expanded with a high school.
2. The Visiting Committee commends the school for being a contributing member to the social fabric of the Keene, NH community.
3. The Visiting Committee commends the school for adding both administrative and professional staff to help carry out the tremendous tasks of securing the existence of SJRS/OLMA. The growth of both schools is outstanding and to be praised.

## **Major Recommendation 1**

The Visiting Committee recommends that the school complete the detailed version of the Strategic Plan by January 2023.

## **Major Recommendation 2**

The Visiting committee recommends that the Board and the School come to a thorough understanding of the expectations of the Board and the relationship of the Board and the School to the Diocese.

## **Major Recommendation 3**

The Visiting Committee supports the school's recommendation for additional coordinated and school-wide professional development on the topic of social emotional learning.

# Ratings Table (rev 020720)

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## Ratings Table (rev 020720)

For each applicable Standard, please:

1. Enter the school's self-rating and the Visiting Committee's rating in the first two columns.
2. Enter an X in the column for "Unmet Rating?" if the Visiting Committee's rating is an SU1 or SU2.
3. Enter an X in "Differing Rating" if the Visiting Committee's rating differs from the school's self-rating.
4. Enter an X in the last column to indicate that you have provided evidence for an unmet or differing rating within the text of the *Visiting Committee Report*.

Skip any Standards which do not apply.

	School's Self-Rating	VC Rating	Unmet Rating	Differing Rating	Evidence Provided for Unmet/Differing Rating (page number)
Foundation Standard 1	SM2	SM2			
Foundation Standard 2	SM2	SM2			
Foundation Standard 3	SM2	SM2			
Foundation Standard 4	SM2	SM2			
Foundation Standard 5	SM2	SM2			
Foundation Standard 6	NA	NA			
Program Standard 7	SM1	SM1			
Program Standard 8	SM2	SM2			
Program Standard 9	SM2	SM2			
Program Standard 10	SM2	SM2			
Program Standard 11	SM2	SM1		SM1	p. 28-29
Program Standard 12	NA	NA			
Program Standard 13	NA	NA			
Strategic Planning Standard 14	SM2	SM2			