



**Standards Assessment Report**  
**AdvancED District Accreditation**  
*For NCA CASI and SACS CASI Districts*

## **Introduction & Purpose of the Report**

Welcome to the AdvancED Standards Assessment Report for school systems.

The Standards Assessment Report is designed to serve as a valuable self-assessment and as a tool to help school systems prepare for their Quality Assurance Review. The report is based on the AdvancED standards, which serve as the foundation of the accreditation process. In order to earn and maintain accreditation, school districts must meet the AdvancED standards, engage in a process of continuous improvement, and demonstrate quality assurance through internal and external review.

The Standards Assessment Report engages the school system in an in-depth assessment of each of the seven AdvancED standards. In completing the report, the school systems identifies the data, information, evidence, and documented results that validate that it is meeting each standard. This self assessment helps the school system identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.

The Standards Assessment Report also serves as the primary resource for the Quality Assurance Review Team, which uses the report to prepare for the visit to the school system. The team uses insights gathered from the report and information obtained during the on-site visit to provide feedback to the school system and to make an accreditation recommendation.

### **Structure of the Report**

The Standards Assessment Report includes five sections: 1) executive summary of the school system profile; 2) a review of each standard; 3) a description of the school system's methods for quality assurance; 4) online peer-to-peer submission; and 5) conclusion.

The executive summary of the school system profile provides an opportunity for the school system to give a snapshot of the system's vision, goals, demographics, and community characteristics. This section helps provide the context for the standards assessment report.

The review of each standard is divided into three components: 1) the indicators rubric; 2) focus questions; and 3) overall assessment rubric. The indicators rubric enables the school system to assess the degree to which practices and/or processes are in place that indicate adherence to the standard and indicators. For each indicator, the school system may check if the practices and/or processes are highly functional, operational, emerging, or not evident. The school system should use the rubric as an opportunity to ask itself challenging questions and to respond with accurate answers geared toward self-improvement. After completing the rubric, the school system can quickly see areas of strength and opportunity. The section asks, "To what degree are the noted practices/processes in place?"

The focus questions allow the school system to expand on and think more deeply about the responses to the indicators rubric. The focus questions provide an opportunity for the school system to describe the systematic and systemic processes that are in place to support its ability to meet the indicators. The section asks, "How are the practices/processes implemented?"

The overall assessment describes how well the school system and its schools are implementing practices and/or processes and the impact these practices and/or processes have on student results and overall school effectiveness. The overall assessment helps the school system judge where it is in relation to each standard. The “operational” level is required in order to demonstrate meeting the standard. The section asks, “How well are we meeting the standard overall”?

The description of the school system’s methods for quality assurance should include an overview of the practices and methods the school system uses to monitor and document improvement, provide meaningful feedback and support across the district, ensure that the AdvancED standards are met and strengthened, and regularly collect, use, and communicate results.

The peer-to-peer submission section asks the school system to share an effective practice. The submission allows the school system to highlight a practice that it feels is indicative of the quality work occurring across the system and its schools. The review team may refer to the practice and use it as the basis for identifying other successful practices occurring in the school system. In addition, the practice is included in the online AdvancED Resource Network where it can be accessed by other AdvancED schools and school systems. Further detail on submitting a peer-to-peer practice is provided just prior to the conclusion section of this document.

The conclusion provides an opportunity for the district to share final insights and information.

### **Resource for Completing the Report**

To support your completion of the report, we have developed an “Examples of Evidence for School Systems” resource that can be downloaded in conjunction with this report. The examples allow school system personnel to think about the practices and/or processes being implemented and identify evidence that will support its responses to the indicators rubric and focus questions. The examples help the school system answer the question, “How do we know we are doing what we say we are doing?”

### **Completion and Submission of the Report**

This Standards Assessment Report is to be completed by the school system between six months and six weeks prior to hosting a Quality Assurance Review (QAR) visit. It is strongly recommended that a wide and broad cross-section of the school system’s community participate in completing this report. Please e-mail the completed report to the QAR chair with a copy to the State Office. The report will become the basis of the Quality Assurance Review Team’s review.

### **Directions for Completing the Report**

Follow the instructions to complete each section of the report. You may type directly in this document. Be thorough and concise in your answers, focusing on quality and depth over quantity. Submit the online peer-to-peer practice, using the instructions provided in this report.

## Executive Summary of School System Profile

### *RAPID CITY CATHOLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM (RCCSS)*

**SYSTEM WEBSITE:** [WWW.RCCSS.NET](http://WWW.RCCSS.NET)

**RCCSS Mission Statement:** “Developing Personal and Academic Excellence in the Catholic Tradition”

**Beliefs:** These beliefs inspire and inform the system mission and vision, and consistently serve as our decision screen.

**About Students and Learning, We Believe that:**

- Students learn in unique ways
- Students need to be challenged
- Students must invest in their education
- Learning is a life-long process

**About Teachers and Teaching, We Believe that:**

- Teachers are powerful role models
- Effective teachers are fair, flexible, and challenging
- Teachers must innovate, change, and grow
- Teachers require resources and support

**About our Catholic Learning Community, We Believe that:**

- The RCCSS is an active, responsible partnership among the Church/parishes, parents, students, faculty, staff, administration, and community at large
- All Catholics should have the opportunity for a Catholic education
- Everyone must be committed to excellence
- Schools must embody the Church’s teachings and traditions
- Students must experience a safe and caring learning environment

**Vision Statement:** The Strategic Design Committee created vision statements for the following nine critical aspects of our schools:

<b>Campus Ministry</b>	How we nurture spiritual life and worship
<b>Curriculum</b>	What we teach/learn
<b>Instruction</b>	How we teach/learn
<b>Assessment</b>	How we measure success and accountability
<b>Technology</b>	How we use technology to customize and expand learning
<b>Stakeholders</b>	How we involve all members of the RCCSS community
<b>Personnel</b>	Whom we employ as an ideal staff

**System Description:**

The governing committee of the RCCSS consists of Bishop Blase Cupich, Bishop of the Diocese of Rapid City, the Bishops' Chancellor, and the Vicar General. Reporting to this governing committee is a twelve-member school board. The Administrative Team is lead by a system Superintendent and includes three building Principals, Director of Academic Services, Head of Guidance, Curriculum Director, Development Director, Activities Director, and Business Manager. The RCCSS employs a total of 106 full and part time staff. The system operates St. Thomas More High School with a current enrollment of 247. In addition, St. Elizabeth Seton houses a Middle School with a current enrollment of 185 students, and K-5 program, which has 330 students. In grades K-12, we have an average student to teacher ratio of 13 to 1. RCCSS also maintains a child development program which is home to a 3 and 4 year old pre-school and enrichment, as well as before and after school care which facilitates 53 children. The total current campus enrollment is 815 students pre-K – 12.

### **System Programs and Services:**

The RCCSS has a comprehensive set of programs and services available.

Saint Thomas More High School programs offer a wide variety of class choices in core subjects, such as: religion, English, math, science, social studies, and foreign languages (Spanish and French). Developing personal and academic excellence also involves offering other advanced classes and six subjects of Advanced Placement (AP). A senior internship program allows students the opportunity to explore career interests under the guidance of professionals in the Rapid City area. The Fine Arts program offers visual and performing arts classes. A broad range of arts opportunities are available to students such as beginning and advanced art, band, jazz band, choir, drama, yearbook, and orchestra. Our students consistently perform well in regional and state competitions. In addition, the RCCSS takes advantage of the SD Arts Council Artist in Residence programs in order to expand opportunities to the students. The RCCSS has various student organizations and extra curricular activities in academic and athletic arenas too. Other notable organizations include: Oral Interpretation, Society of Savio, Math Counts, Knowledge Bowl, Chess Club, and Sign Language Club. Serving others is another important facet of our Rapid City Catholic Schools. Our seniors will have completed 50 hours of community service in order to graduate and a similar service commitment is required in grades 6-12.

Saint Elizabeth Seton Middle School programs include the traditional core programs along with Catholic religion classes. Enrichment opportunities in the areas of language, music, science, and life skills allow students to expand their core curriculum. Study skills and keyboarding are offered to students needing remediation. SES middle school students can be involved in the following extra curricular programs: Student Council, Knowledge Bowl, Instrumental, Vocal, and Orchestra programs, Teen Life Choices (TLC), Character Counts, and a variety of athletic opportunities.

Saint Elizabeth Seton Elementary School programs include a well-developed Balanced Literacy Program. The components of this program are Guided Reading, Word Study, and Writers Workshop. The traditional curriculum includes language arts, math, science, social science, health, and religion classes. Other offerings include physical education, music, Reading Recovery, Chapel Choir, a Child Development Program including a 3 and 4 year old Pre-School

and before and after school childcare, DARE, Junior Achievement, Project EXCEL, Kids Against Hunger, Big Friends and Little Friends, and Missoula Children's Theatre. The students at elementary and middle school do many smaller projects to give to the community. Thanksgiving baskets, KOTA share and care food programs, Project Good Samaritan, and others are just a few of the projects that help students learn about civic responsibility. Title I services are accessed through the Rapid City Public Schools. Our system has developed a strong relationship with Ellsworth Air Force Base and the National Guard.

The RCCSS is a state-accredited system that provides a Catholic education for families in Rapid City and the surrounding areas. Two Academic Service Coordinators for K-12 facilitate meetings and help monitor and ensure that the needs of at-risk students are being met. In addition, three counselors tend to the academic, mental health, and scholarship needs of both students and their families. Parenting classes and faculty training in the Love and Logic Philosophy are offered throughout the school year. RCCSS offers EdLine (a parent portal to student records) which helps family's access student grades, attendance, and other pertinent school information. School Reach affords phone and email messaging to inform students and families of current events in the system. Our system website is currently being updated to a newer format and is developing links necessary to give easy access to all facets of our system. 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and technology play important roles in the lives of our students; therefore, more resources are being allocated annually to facilitate the implementation of our five-year technology plan. Four media specialists are employed to facilitate this plan. Professional development opportunities and training in current technology are also offered to faculty and staff on a regular basis. Catholic education values its partnership with parents. Tremendous support is provided to RCCSS through parent volunteerism via the Arts, PTO, Booster Club, and other organizations. The result of such community participation is improved family connections and financial support. Resources from these volunteers have been allocated to the general operating budget of the system and have provided funding for individual classroom programs, projects, and other identified needs.

### **Community Demographics:**

The 2000 census reports 59,607 people, 23,969 households, and 15,220 families residing in the city. Population density is 516.1/km<sup>2</sup> (1,336.7/mi<sup>2</sup>). There are 25,096 housing units at an average density of 217.3/km<sup>2</sup> (562.8/mi<sup>2</sup>). The racial makeup of the city is 84.33% White, 10.14% Native American, 2.77% Hispanic or Latino, 1.00% Asian, 0.97% African American, 0.73% from other races, and 0.06% Pacific Islander.

There are 23,969 households, out of which 31.2% have children under the age of 18. 46.7% are married couples living together, 12.6% have a female householder with no husband present, and 36.5% are non-families. 29.4% of all households are made up of individuals and 10.0% have single persons 65 years of age or older. The average household size is 2.39 and the average family size is 2.96.

In the city the population is spread out with 25.3% under the age of 18, 11.8% from 18 to 24, 28.7% from 25 to 44, 20.9% from 45 to 64, and 13.2% who are 65 years of age or older. The median age is 35 years. For every 100 females there are 96.2 males. For every 100 females age 18 and over, there are 93.6 males.

The median income for a household in the city is \$35,978, and the median income for a family is \$44,818. Males have a median income of \$30,985 versus \$21,913 for females. The per capita income for the city is \$19,445. 12.7% of the population and 9.4% of families are below the poverty line. Out of the total population, 17.6% of those under the age of 18, and 6.9% of those 65 and older are living below the poverty line.

Rapid City is home to South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, National American University, Western Dakota Technical Institute as well as our Higher Learning Center which offers degrees from all of the state’s public universities.

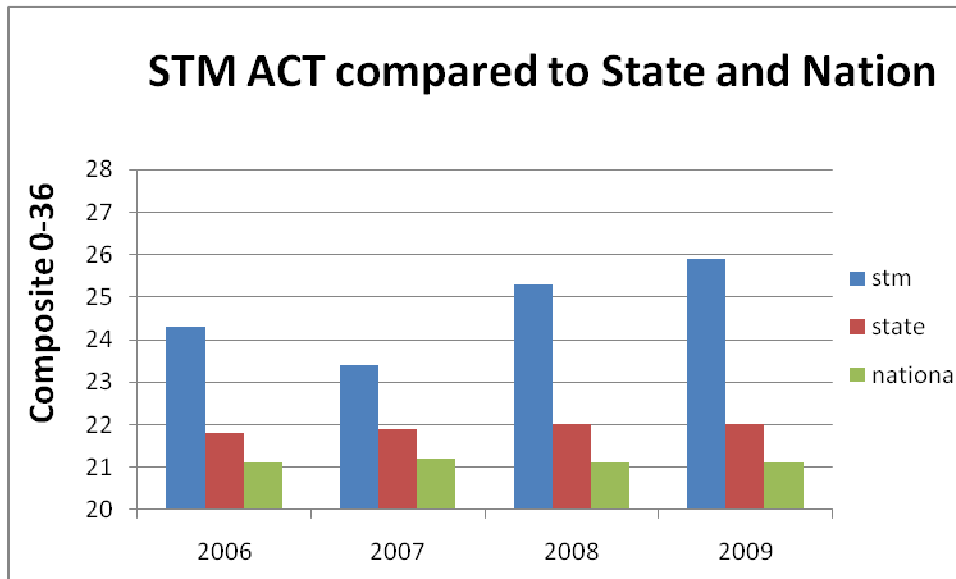
In addition to being the head of the RCCSS Governing Committee, Bishop Blase Cupich leads the Diocese of Rapid City. The Diocese is largely rural and has a diverse demographic. More information about the Diocese can be found at: [www.rapidcitydiocese.org](http://www.rapidcitydiocese.org) . Bishop Cupich is a strong advocate for Catholic Education, and, furthermore, works in tandem with RCCSS to ensure all who desire a Catholic Education, including Non-Catholics, will be offered that opportunity. The following graphs show the spiritual and cultural break out of the RCCSS.

	<u>K-8 BY ETHNICITY</u>			<u>9-12 ENROLLMENT BY ETHNICITY</u>		
	CATHOLIC	NON-CATHOLIC	Total	CATHOLIC	NON-CATHOLIC	Total
NATIVE AMERICAN	22	5	27	9	1	10
ASIAN	5	4	9	3	0	3
BLACK	0	0	0	1	1	2
HISPANIC	15	6	21	6	0	6
NATIVE HAWAII /PAC ISL	3	0	3	1	0	1
WHITE	435	68	503	174	46	220
MULTI-RACIAL	5	0		5	0	5
UNKNOWN			0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>485</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>568</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>247</b>

**Student Performance:**

The RCCSS has a tradition of excellence in academics. In a typical graduating class, 96% of our students pursue higher education. Data provided from the sytem’s standardized assessments show that students consistently perform above the state and national averages. It is typical for our students, as a whole group, to perform at or above the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile in the SAT10 tests. This test is given to 5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> annually. This performance level has a small degree of change through the past 10 years, but has remained consistent over this period. Though such performance is strong, we are always seeking ways to improve our results. Reading and math goals have been set at all levels. Interventions and strategies have been established to ensure that the goals are met.

The ACT is the most widely used college entrance exam in the Midwest, and a majority of our graduating seniors sit for this exam. Testing spreadsheets and performance reports are available through the counseling office. The following spreadsheet reports the STM graduate ACT performance through 2009:



Student performance extends into other important categories. We believe that within a Catholic school system, fine arts are more than a graduation requirement: they are an integral part of the Church. Our Fine Arts program has excelled in music, theatre, and art. Some of the accomplishments of the music program include Jazz band's selection as one of two SD high schools to perform at the 2010 Jazz Masters Festival; 1<sup>st</sup> place showing at the Black Hills State University Jazz Fest; consistent student representation in all-state Orchestra, Band, Jazz Band, and Choir over the past 5 years. In addition, RCCSS performed the challenging musical, "The Sound of Music" last year. Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, who was in the area, commented that the performance was the best high school production he had ever attended. Unique to this performance was the musical sound track performed by the RCCSS orchestra. Also, The Missoula Children's Theatre utilizes students from lower grades for a performance annually. Feel free to walk around our buildings, and look at some of the prestigious awards earned by our artists.

Catholic Education is also about excellence in other programs, including athletics. The advancement of the Gospel Mission is the first and foremost reason for strong athletics. Participation in "Gospel" athletics sets the stage for developing young people who treat one another with respect and value the dignity of others. We believe that athletics are an extension of the classroom. Learning to build on the strengths of each other leads to strong teams. Strong teams build great community. We believe that the athletic programs offer a teaching environment that is understood to be part of the RCCSS goal of "Developing Personal and Academic Excellence in the Catholic Tradition." Historical data shows that 80-90% of the students at STM participate in competitive athletics; many of those students perform in two or more activities throughout the year. We believe the investment made in the lives of the students who participate in these programs will provide a benefit to them for the rest of their lives. Again,

we would encourage you to walk around our buildings and look at the many accomplishments of our athletes.

The International OLWEUS Bullying Prevention Program is research-based for K-8 and will be implemented at RCCSS in January of 2010. This comprehensive program consists of teacher, student, parent and community components and addresses the continuing goal of embracing understanding and diversity among all community members.

### **Major Trends or Issues Impacting the School System:**

To give our students a competitive edge for their place in the world, we must equip them with 21<sup>st</sup> century life skills including leadership, ethics, accountability, adaptability, productivity, personal responsibility, people skills, self direction, and social responsibility. The technological advances of the 21<sup>st</sup> century require students to learn and adapt to new innovations. The demands of the workplace require that critical thinking, information technology, health and wellness, collaboration, innovation, and person financial responsibility. Teaching such skills in content areas will be growing in importance in the next five years. A national publication, *Today's Catholic Teacher*, awarded Saint Thomas More High School with an innovation in curriculum award for the sophomore field experience in water exploration. We continue to struggle with the pace of change and innovation in the field of technology, and funding continues to be a challenge. Yet, great progress has been made in meeting the goals of our five-year technology plan. For example, resources have been allocated to provide support resources such as interactive white boards, ceiling-mounted projectors, laptops, student response systems, software, computer learning center, and staff training. We are continually adapting this plan to fit the future marketplace.

The State Department of Education initiated the Tech Path process in the summer of 2002. Thirteen faculty members and two administrators attended from our district. The following summer the state offered Part II of this process. This was attended by five faculty and one administrator. After the initiative was adopted, a core curriculum mapping committee was formed and established a timeline of implementation. Tech Paths,' computer software, is being utilized to develop core curriculum maps across the district, which allows teachers to align curriculum to state standards. Some content areas have begun vertical mapping to ensure curriculum continuity.

Support for our Catholic Schools emerged as a top priority during our Diocesan Strategic Planning in 2002. It became clear that we have a responsibility to build on the accomplishments of our ancestors by taking up the task in our own time to form our children in the faith of our fathers and mothers. Partnering with the Diocese of Rapid City, RCCSS purchased 200 acres and the buildings on the edge of Rapid City. This acquisition is a blessing that requires additional sources of income. We hope to develop a strong feeder program with the addition of a twelve-month child development program and additional sections of K-5. With the transitioning of these elementary children to St. Martins Monastery, the current SES building will become the middle school building to accommodate our growing student population.

Funding continues to be a challenge. Grant writing has afforded opportunities to add and develop programs not otherwise possible. For example the *Toyota Tapestry Grant, Best Buy,*

*and Midcontinent Grants*, have provided funding for the sophomore field experience project and the robotics class. In addition, the *Adams-Mastrovich Family Foundation* has awarded the RCCSS in excess of \$30,000, which has provided funding for the fine arts. *Homeland Security* provided \$30,000 for a security card access system and camera upgrade to our buildings. Another notable accomplishment is the success of the Endowment for Excellence in Education. This endowment, begun in 2004, has raised over four million dollars and provides additional income to the operational budget.

Finally, there is the issue of affordability. The finance committee of the RCCSS board has set a goal to research cost-based tuition, needs-based assistance, as they look for ways to make Catholic education more affordable. Tuition assistance is currently available, but the need exceeds the available resources. As we look to the future, the goal of increased enrollment relies heavily on keeping tuition within the reach of area stakeholders.

### **Major Strengths and Needs of the School System:**

Catholic systems rely heavily on community involvement to provide the best educational opportunities for students. With this in mind, we see the faculty, staff, students, and parents as a major strength in our system. The common goal of “Developing Personal and Academic Excellence” is shared by all. High expectations and accountability are in place for faculty and students. The involvement of our parents aids in reducing costs and keeping expectations high. Our local priests and parishes support us spiritually and financially. Needless to say, we could not accomplish our mission without strong support from these groups of people.

The RCCSS has committed ongoing funds to professional development that will bring about a systemic and systematic approach to data analysis, assessment, curriculum development, highly qualified teacher status, and in-service work. The process of curriculum mapping, involving the use of Tech Paths, has assisted in developing a more productive and cohesive staff.

In order for administrators and teachers to be effective role models, they must engage in adequate training. As a system, then, we have partnered with the Technology In Education (TIE) office in developing a strategic plan for Professional Development (PD). This began with a needs assessment, which revealed the magnitude of PD that was occurring. From the compiled evidence, we were able to create a focus for future development. Research tells us that the strongest indicator for achievement is the classroom teacher. With these findings, the RCCSS has allocated resources to create a systemic professional development program.

## **Standards Review**

### **Vision & Purpose**

**STANDARD: The system establishes and communicates a shared purpose and direction for improving the performance of students and the effectiveness of the system.**

Impact Statement: A system is successful in meeting this standard when it commits to a purpose and direction that is shared system-wide. The leadership establishes expectations for student learning aligned with the system’s vision that is supported by system and school personnel and external stakeholders. These expectations serve as the focus for assessing student performance and district effectiveness. The system’s vision guides allocations of time and human, material, and fiscal resources.

**Indicators Rubric**

Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school system. The responses to the rubric should help the school system identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school system’s responses to the focus questions.

<b>INDICATORS</b>		<b>Not Evident</b>	<b>Emerging</b>	<b>Operational</b>	<b>Highly Functional</b>
<b>In fulfillment of this standard, the system:</b>					
1.1	Establishes a vision and purpose for the system in collaboration with its stakeholders				X
1.2	Communicates the system’s vision and purpose to build stakeholder understanding and support			X	
1.3	Identifies system-wide goals and measures to advance the vision			X	
1.4	Develops and continuously maintains a profile of the system, its students, and the community			X	
1.5	Ensures that the system’s vision and purpose guide the teaching and learning process and the strategic direction of schools, departments, and services			X	
1.6	Reviews its vision and purpose systematically and revises them when appropriate			X	

**Definitions**

- Not Evident                      Little or no evidence exists
- Emerging                        Evidence indicates early or preliminary stages of implementation of practice
- Operational                      Evidence indicates practices and procedures are actively implemented
- Highly Functional              Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

**Focus Questions**

Please respond to the following questions regarding the processes that are in place to support the school system’s implementation of the research-based practices outlined in the indicators rubric. Responses to these questions should support the school system’s self-assessment on the

indicators rubric. Be thorough and concise in your answers, focusing on quality and depth over quantity.

**1. What is the process for establishing and building understanding of and commitment to the vision statement among the school system and its stakeholders?**

The district's building and implementation of the Strategic Design Plan for the Rapid City Catholic School System (RCCSS) was facilitated by Dr. Chuck Schwahn in 2002 and reassessed in 2008. The beliefs, values and mission of the Strategic Design Plan are the decision screen for our system.

How we translate our creative energies, values, and aspirations into a vision that will facilitate the realization of our dreams for Catholic education is a task that lies before us. Our vision of the RCCSS, then, is a compelling portrait of who we want to be when we are operating at our best and in accordance with our deepest sense of faith-filled purpose. Such a vision, aligned with our core values, beliefs and mission, will guide our educational practices so that learners can coningle their personal visions with the RCCSS communal vision: such a melding generates the commitment and energy necessary to meet the changing needs of our learning community.

The mission statement "*Developing Personal and Academic Excellence in the Catholic Tradition*" is foremost in planning and decision making with regard to teaching and learning. Students are immersed in the statement through announcements each morning, banners posted in each school, signs posted in each classroom, monthly newsletters, website, and EdLine (grade management software).

Understanding is facilitated with our communal stakeholders through the common language used in our dialogues. The broader community comes to know who RCCSS is by the conversations our stakeholders have. The Strategic Design language is integrated in day to day operations.

**2. What is the system's process for maintaining and using information that describes the school system, its programs, services, and schools and their performance?**

The governing committee, board, administration, faculty, and staff are responsible for maintaining and using information that describe programs and services. Presentations by administrators, staff, and students are made to school board, community, staff, and service organizations. Parent orientations typically engage approximately 95% of our families, and information regarding programs, services, and performance is shared at this venue. RCCSS media sources provide parents and community stakeholders with information about the system through the school profile, newsletters, school brochures, newspaper, television and radio announcements, parish bulletins, and the school website. System-wide documents are updated as annual data becomes available.

**3. How does the leadership ensure that the system's vision, purpose, and goals guide the work of the school system and its schools?**

The RCCSS School Board and administration set policies and establish goals that are implemented district-wide and reviewed annually. The board and the administration team dedicate funding, time, and training to incorporate district strategies for improvement, such as focused staff development, curriculum mapping, and time for teacher/staff collaboration. An annual summer retreat is attended by the board and administrators, and system issues are discussed. The results of the discussion lead to goal setting for the committees. This year's goals address affordability, funding, communication, enhancement of technology, and facilities maintenance/improvement.

RCCSS encourages all staff to be actively involved on decision-making committees at the local and state level. New staff orientation, staff retreats, faculty handbook, and evaluations help ensure that the vision guides the work of the school.

The finance committee of the RCCSS board has set a goal to research cost-based tuition and needs-based assistance as we look for ways to make Catholic education more affordable. Tuition assistance is currently available, but the need exceeds the available resources.

#### **4. What process is used to ensure that the vision and purpose of the school system remain current and aligned with the system's expectations in support of student learning and the effectiveness of the school system and its schools?**

RCCSS annually reviews and reevaluates the district goals based on the school's vision. In the spring of 2008, representatives from across all levels of the system came together for the first data retreat. In the spring of 2009, the district held its first K-12 data retreat to review 2008 data and begin to set goals for the 2009-2010 school year. In the fall of 2009, two additional data retreats were held using the spring 2009 data to finalize the 2009-2010 goals.

The Strategic Design plan was reassessed in 2009 and a presentation was made by Dr. Chuck Schwahn to address the technological future. Constantly striving for academic and personal excellence in the Catholic tradition is endeavored by using the most current assessment data, teacher evaluations, data retreats, and in-service activities. Our students are learning 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in the classroom which will prepare them to meet the technological advances they will face.

## **Governance & Leadership**

**STANDARD: The system provides governance and leadership that promote student performance and system effectiveness.**

Impact Statement: A system is successful in meeting this standard when it has leaders who are advocates for the system's vision and improvement efforts. The leaders provide direction and allocate resources to implement curricular and co-curricular programs that enable students to achieve expectations for their learning. Leaders function with clearly defined authority and responsibility and encourage collaboration and shared responsibility for system and school

improvement among stakeholders. The system’s policies, procedures, and organizational conditions ensure equity of learning opportunities and support for innovation.

### Indicators Rubric

Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school system. The responses to the rubric should help the school system identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school system’s responses to the focus questions.

INDICATORS		Not Evident	Emerging	Operational	Highly Functional
<b>In fulfillment of this standard, the system operates under the jurisdiction of a governing authority that:</b>					
2.1	Establishes and communicates policies and procedures that provide for the effective operation of the system			X	
2.2	Recognizes and preserves the executive, administrative, and leadership authority of the administrative head of the system				X
2.3	Ensures compliance with applicable local, state, and federal laws, standards, and regulations			X	
2.4	Implements policies and procedures that provide for the orientation and training of the governing board			X	
2.5	Builds public support, secures sufficient resources, and acts as a steward of the system’s resources			X	
2.6	Maintains access to legal counsel to advise or obtain information about legal requirements and obligations				X
2.7	Maintains adequate insurance or equivalent resources to protect its financial stability and administrative operations			X	
<b>In fulfillment of this standard, the system has leadership that:</b>					
2.8	Provides for systematic analysis and review of student performance and school and system effectiveness			X	
2.9	Creates and supports collaborative networks of stakeholders to support system programs			X	
2.10	Provides direction, assistance, and resources to align, support, and enhance all parts of the system in meeting organizational and student performance goals			X	
2.11	Provides internal and external stakeholders meaningful roles in the decision-making process that promote a culture of participation, responsibility, and ownership			X	
2.12	Assesses and addresses community expectations and stakeholder satisfaction			X	
2.13	Implements an evaluation system that provides for the				X

	professional growth of all personnel				
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**Definitions**

Not Evident	Little or no evidence exists
Emerging	Evidence indicates early or preliminary stages of implementation of practice
Operational	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are actively implemented
Highly Functional	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

**Focus Questions: Standard 2 Leadership & Governance**

Please respond to the following questions regarding the processes that are in place to support the school system’s implementation of the research-based practices outlined in the indicators rubric. Responses to these questions should support the school system’s self-assessment on the indicators rubric. Be thorough and concise in your answers, focusing on quality and depth over quantity.

**1. What is the process for establishing, communicating, and implementing policies and procedures for the effective operation of the school system and its schools?**

The Rapid City Catholic School System (RCCSS) establishes, communicates, and implements policies and procedures based on the collective needs of stakeholders, the system mission statement, and the Strategic Design Plan. Stakeholders have the opportunity to suggest new policies and procedures to school administration. If these items are supported by administration, they are submitted to the school board for approval, and the school board acts upon suggested items. New policies and procedures are communicated to the staff and faculty via email, staff meetings and training sessions, or through established handbooks or other written guidelines. Approved policies and procedures are implemented system-wide.

**2. What process does the system’s leadership use to evaluate system effectiveness and its impact on student performance?**

The RCCSS uses a variety of assessments to evaluate system effectiveness and student performance. Based on this process, students achieve, on average, in the 82<sup>nd</sup> percentile on the SAT 10, giving credence to our system’s functionality using formative and summative assessments. The school board regularly reviews local, state, and national assessment data K-12 to gauge and improve student achievement and to encourage staff growth and innovation. Administrators utilize both formal and informal evaluation methods to enhance teaching and learning, including standardized and teacher-created assessments.

Data retreats offer additional information to guide ongoing improvement. Other assessment/evaluation procedures may include observations, anecdotal evidence, and EdLine to communicate ongoing student and staff performance.

Further, parent surveys and parent involvement in committees provide meaningful feedback from the stakeholder population. Face-to-face contact among stakeholders occurs in parent-teacher conferences two times per year, orientation gatherings, liturgical services, ongoing progress reports, and informal settings.

**3. In what ways are stakeholders, including system and school staff, given opportunities to provide leadership and to contribute to the decision-making process?**

Stakeholders are given ample opportunities to contribute to the system’s decision-making process. Various committees including the Superintendent Advisory, AdvancEd, technology, curriculum, department heads, as well as surveys/questionnaires and stakeholder involvement provide feedback for the administration. Stakeholder collaboration provides opportunities to improve system effectiveness such as the implementation of the Computer Learning Center located at Saint Thomas More and the Guided Reading Center located at Saint Elizabeth Seton. Community and parent stakeholders contribute to each team to advance the vision of the system through direct contact with teachers and administrators. Parent involvement in organizations such as the Fine Arts Club and Heart & Soul provide important school resources and support. Stakeholders have been instrumental in advancing the fine arts curriculum to improve student retention, which resulted in extending the school day. Stakeholders participate in course scheduling process, curriculum review and revision, regular staff meetings, department meetings, numerous committees, and other activities to achieve system goals.

**4. What policies and processes are in place to ensure equity of learning opportunities and support for innovation?**

RCCSS’s core belief that every student deserves equity of learning opportunities to develop personal and academic excellence in the Catholic tradition is central to our existence. RCCSS leaders strive to support innovative teaching and learning to that end. Evidence of that support is demonstrated, for example, in the student achievement level that resulted in 3.6 million dollars in post graduate scholarship funding in the past academic year and in student acceptance into a wide variety of public and private post-graduate institutions of higher learning.

RCCSS policies are also inclusive of all students and ensure equal learning opportunities based upon the Strategic Design Plan and mission statement. Lack of resources is a challenge, yet-RCCSS remains committed to securing equity for all. Examples of organizational and monetary commitment to this goal include the endowment fund, the annual Mayfest fundraiser, and ongoing community outreach activities. A wide range of available services include special education support, individual and group tutorials (teacher- and student-led), counseling, academic intervention meetings among stakeholders, and small class sizes, which contribute to differentiated learning and student success. Leadership provides support for innovations in teaching and learning with technology advances, cross-curricular projects like the Sophomore Field Experience (nationally recognized by *Today’s Catholic Teacher* magazine), and field experiences such as the 8<sup>th</sup> grade Mammoth Site visit.

## **Teaching & Learning**

**STANDARD: The system provides research-based curriculum and instructional methods that facilitate achievement for all students.**

Impact Statement: A system is successful in meeting this standard when it implements a curriculum based on clear and measurable expectations for student learning that provides opportunities for all students to acquire requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The system ensures that teachers use proven instructional practices that actively engage students in the learning process; provide opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and skills to real world situations; and give students feedback to improve their performance.

**Indicators Rubric**

Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school system. The responses to the rubric should help the school system identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school system’s responses to the focus questions.

<b>INDICATORS</b>		<b>Not Evident</b>	<b>Emerging</b>	<b>Operational</b>	<b>Highly Functional</b>
<b>In fulfillment of this standard, the system:</b>					
3.1	Develops, articulates, and coordinates curriculum based on clearly- defined expectations for student learning, including essential knowledge and skills			X	
3.2	Establishes expectations and supports student engagement in the learning process, including opportunities for students to explore application of higher order thinking skills and investigate new approaches to applying their learning			X	
3.3	Ensures that system-wide curricular and instructional decisions are based on data and research at all levels		X		
3.4	Supports instruction that is research-based and reflective of best practice			X	
3.5	Supports a curriculum that challenges and meets the needs of each student, reflects a commitment to equity, and demonstrates an appreciation of diversity			X	
3.6	Allocates and protects instructional time to support student learning			X	
3.7	Maintains articulation among and between all levels of schooling to monitor student performance and ensure readiness for future schooling or employment			X	
3.8	Supports the implementation of interventions to help students meet expectations for student learning			X	
3.9	Maintains a system-wide climate that supports student learning			X	

3.10	Ensures that curriculum is reviewed and revised at regular intervals		X		
3.11	Coordinates and ensures ready access to instructional technology, information and media services, and materials needed for effective instruction		X		

**Definitions**

Not Evident	Little or no evidence exists
Emerging	Evidence indicates early or preliminary stages of implementation of practice
Operational	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are actively implemented
Highly Functional	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

**Focus Questions**

Please respond to the following questions regarding the processes that are in place to support the school system’s implementation of the research-based practices outlined in the indicators rubric. Responses to these questions should support the school system’s self-assessment on the indicators rubric. Be thorough and concise in your answers, focusing on quality and depth over quantity.

**1. How does the system ensure the alignment and articulation of curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessments in support of the expectations for student learning?**

RCCSS uses the South Dakota State Standards to align and articulate curriculum as well as a scope and sequence for all subjects and grade levels. The district is implementing curriculum mapping to ensure the South Dakota State Standards are met. Programs that have been adopted by the RCCSS include Reading Recovery, Project Excel (gifted education), individualized student programs (Helping Hands and Service Plans for those identified with special needs) and Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (implementation in January 2010). The district has a full-time literacy aide, paraprofessional, and a Special Education teacher who work with students to meet their needs. In addition, RCCSS offers programs to support student learning including internships, service projects, motivational speakers, Math Counts, SD Counts, Marzano Instructional Strategies, Power Up Plus, and various other academic clubs that support and enhance classroom experiences and personal interests.

Student progress and performance is measured through both summative and formative assessment tools. The district holds building-level meetings and system-wide data retreats to discuss standardized test results. This data helps drive instructional decisions and set goals for our continuous improvement plan.

**2. In what ways does the system promote and support the implementation of research-based instructional strategies, innovations, and activities that facilitate achievement for all students?**

RCCSS promotes professional development and offers many opportunities to study research-based strategies. In-services and early release days are conducted throughout the school

year, which incorporate staff recommendations. Staff members are encouraged and given support to attend workshops and conferences.

Innovation in the classroom has been influenced by a variety of grants too, which have allowed our Middle School Choir students to make their own drums and other students to learn robotics, for example.

Harry Wong, 6+1 WritingTraits, Reading Recovery, and a Balanced Literacy program are currently being used in our system. In addition, the staff utilizes the Love and Logic philosophy. By attending conferences and using a library of audio and video tapes teachers have many tools to aid in classroom management. Parenting classes and other materials are also available. At the elementary level, literacy classes are offered to enhance and improve classroom instruction. Curriculum mapping K-12, through the use of Tech Paths, is reviewed and updated on a continual basis.

In the past year, the district has conducted three data retreats. Data is being used to create goals in the areas of reading and mathematics. Based upon a staff survey, professional development has been implemented regarding research-based instructional strategies, supported by Marzano. A survey last year found that 67% of staff is integrating all 14 of Marzano's strategies. Staff will be involved in idea-sharing at staff meetings and in-services and publishing a resource book for classroom instructional purposes.

### **3. What processes are implemented to ensure that all staff members are well-prepared to support and implement the district's expectations for student learning?**

District, school, department, and grade-level meetings are held throughout the school year, including early release times for professional development. Vertical and horizontal curriculum mapping discussions are held to ensure state standards are being addressed across grade levels. As a Technology & Innovations in Education (TIE) member, RCCSS offers the faculty opportunities for staff development on system-wide and individual bases. Faculty members are encouraged to attend national and state level conferences, such as the National Catholic Education Association Convention and Systems Change Conference. Administrators require staff to set specific annual goals that relate to professional and curriculum development. Annual data retreats are held to assess student achievement. Book studies on current educational trends are selected on an annual basis at the elementary level. The high school has brought in visiting speakers to address current issues and trends as well.

### **4. How does the system ensure that all students and staff have access to comprehensive information, instructional technology, and media services?**

RCCSS promotes the implementation of technology for both staff and students at all grade levels. One of our technology goals, as a result of committee work, is to improve student achievement and teacher effectiveness through data-driven decisions effecting curriculum. New staff is required to attend a technology training orientation. Each school has a computer lab available for student use, and all classrooms have computer access. Wireless access is available throughout the high school. Interactive white Boards and LCD projectors are being added as the budget allows. The district has a Pre-K 12 technology curriculum aligned with state standards. Technology support staff is available to inform faculty of useful websites,

updates, resources and web links to enhance curriculum. The network administrator has scheduled thirty three hours of staff training for the 2009-10 school year, which can be used toward certified renewal credit through the a state university.

RCCSS also recently updated the five-year technology plan. The plan includes professional development requirements (teacher proficiency levels), technology infrastructure (hardware and software), and curriculum integration. Resource budget allocations support the goals of the technology committee. Our system is grateful for donations from community stakeholders who help us to reach our technology goals. EdLine, e-newsletters, School Reach, and the new school website keep stakeholders involved and informed.

## Documenting & Using Results

**STANDARD: The system enacts a comprehensive assessment system that monitors and documents performance and uses these results to improve student performance and system effectiveness.**

Impact Statement: A school system is successful in meeting this standard when it uses a comprehensive assessment system based on clearly-defined performance measures. The assessment system is used to assess student performance on expectations for student learning, identify gaps between expectations for student learning and student performance, evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction, and determine interventions to improve student performance. The assessment system yields timely and accurate information that is meaningful and useful to system and school leaders, teachers, and other stakeholders in understanding student performance, system and school effectiveness, and the results of improvement efforts.

### Indicators Rubric

Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school system. The responses to the rubric should help the school system identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school system’s responses to the focus questions.

<b>INDICATORS</b>		<b>Not Evident</b>	<b>Emerging</b>	<b>Operational</b>	<b>Highly Functional</b>
<b>In fulfillment of this standard, the system:</b>					
4.1	Establishes and implements a comprehensive assessment system, aligned with the system’s expectations for student learning, that yields information which is reliable, valid, and bias free			X	
4.2	Ensures that student assessment data are used to make decisions for continuous improvement of teaching and learning			X	
4.3	Conducts a systematic analysis of instructional and organizational			X	

	effectiveness, including support systems, and uses the results to improve student and system performance				
4.4	Provides a system of communication which uses a variety of methods to report student performance and system effectiveness to all stakeholders			X	
4.5	Uses comparison and trend data from comparable school systems to evaluate student performance and system effectiveness			X	
4.6	Demonstrates verifiable growth in student performance that is supported by multiple sources of evidence			X	
4.7	Maintains a secure, accurate, and complete student record system in accordance with state and federal regulations				X

**Definitions**

Not Evident	Little or no evidence exists
Emerging	Evidence indicates early or preliminary stages of implementation of practice
Operational	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are actively implemented
Highly Functional	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

**Focus Questions for Standard 4**

Please respond to the following questions regarding the processes that are in place to support the school system’s implementation of the research-based practices outlined in the indicators rubric. Responses to these questions should support the school system’s self-assessment on the indicators rubric. Be thorough and concise in your answers, focusing on quality and depth over quantity.

**1. How is the assessment system currently used throughout the school system and its schools to guide analysis of changes in student performance?**

RCCSS uses a variety of standardized tests to monitor student ability and achievement. The state of South Dakota requires the Stanford Writing Assessment for grades 5, 7 and 10, Dakota Step tests for grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 11, and Technology Assessment for grade 8. In addition, RCCSS has adopted the use of the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT 10) for grades 5, 8, and 11, Otis-Lennon School Ability Test for grades 3, 6 and 11, Preliminary SAT (PSAT) for grades 10 and 11, and the Preliminary ACT (PLAN) for grade 10. A variety of literacy assessments, classroom work, and tests monitor student achievement. A survey was completed in 2009 outlining the types of assessment tools used K-12 (all results are available through the counselor’s office).

All forms of data are used to assess the success of curriculum. For instance, when overall performance was lower on writing tests than in any other subset of education, RCCSS implemented 6+1 Writing Traits K-12, which has improved overall student performance.

Achievement test data is shared with parents through standardized home reports, online data, parent conferences, and is available through individual meetings with the counselor. Data retreats are held to assess student achievement and set goals. Curriculum mapping K-12 has been used to find gaps, correct them, and improve test performance. These maps are also used to align curriculum with the state standards.

**2. What are you doing to ensure that assessment results are timely, relevant, and communicated in a way that can be used by the system, its schools, and stakeholders to aid the performance of individual students?**

Results from all standardized tests are shared with the School Board and parents as soon as they are made available by the state. Parents receive the results with the last report card, or are mailed if the results are received after the end of the school year. The report includes trend data, grade level and individual student performance data which are shared with staff during the school's in-service days, early releases, staff meetings and other times relevant to school improvement. The RCCSS uses Edline to keep parents and students aware of weekly progress through online access to classroom grades, course materials, attendance, and calendars. RCCSS posts specific test statistics online. Individual meetings are available to parents looking for more information about student performance. Results are used for continuous improvement, marketing, and advertising purposes.

TIE facilitated a data retreat with the building-level teams in April 2007, and three K-12 data retreats have taken place within the past year. Data has indicated most students performed well above state and national averages.

**3. How are data used to understand and improve overall effectiveness of the school system and its schools?**

Data from the DakotaSTEP are used to guide professional development opportunities. Staff analyzes the results to determine areas of strength and need. Additionally, a subcategory review of all individual SAT 10 results is made, and all students identified with a national percentile rank of 30% or below are brought to the attention of the current year teacher. Results are also shared with administrators to help support the Special Education teacher and support staff in making instructional decisions. Curriculum mapping and other teacher opportunities are used to further develop the rigorous standards of RCCSS.

RCCSS maintains EdLine which keeps parents and caregivers informed of the students' progress. This has been one of the most praised additions to RCCSS.

**4. How is staff members across the system and its schools trained to understand and use data to impact teaching and learning in the classroom?**

The March 2009 K-12 data retreat provided the staff with an in-depth look at student achievement. This retreat was followed with two data retreats in the fall of 2009 and focused on reading and math. A dialogue was initiated for improving student performance. The administration is supportive of professional development opportunities to enhance teacher's competence in the understanding of data.

## **Resource & Support Systems**

**STANDARD: The system has the resources and services necessary to support its vision and purpose and to ensure achievement for all students.**

Impact Statement: A system is successful in meeting this standard when it has sufficient human, material, and fiscal resources to implement a curriculum that: enables students to achieve expectations for student learning, meets special needs, and complies with applicable regulations. The system employs and allocates staff well-qualified for their assignments. The system provides ongoing learning opportunities for all staff to improve their effectiveness. The system ensures compliance with applicable local, state, and federal regulations.

**Indicators Rubric**

Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school system. The responses to the rubric should help the school system identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school system’s responses to the focus questions.

<b>INDICATORS</b>		<b>Not Evident</b>	<b>Emerging</b>	<b>Operational</b>	<b>Highly Functional</b>
<b>In fulfillment of this standard, the system:</b>					
	<b>Human Resources</b>				
5.1	Establishes and implements processes to recruit, employ, retain, and mentor qualified professional and support staff to fulfill assigned roles and responsibilities			X	
5.2	Establishes and implements a process to assign professional and support staff based on system needs and staff qualifications as may be required by federal and state law and regulations (i.e., professional preparation, ability, knowledge, and experience)			X	
5.3	Establishes and implements a process to design, evaluate, and improve professional development and ensures participation by all faculty and staff			X	
5.4	Ensures that staff are sufficient in number to meet the vision and purpose of the school system and to meet federal and state law and regulations, if applicable			X	
	<b>Financial Resources</b>				
5.5	Engages in long-range budgetary planning and annually budgets sufficient resources to support its educational programs and to implement its plans for improvement			X	
5.6	Ensures that all financial transactions are safeguarded through proper budgetary procedures and audited accounting measures				X
	<b>Physical Resources</b>				
5.7	Maintains sites, facilities, services, and equipment to			X	

	provide a safe, orderly, and healthy environment				
5.8	Establishes and implements written security and crisis management plans with appropriate training for stakeholders				X
5.9	Implements processes and plans for maintaining and improving sites, facilities, and equipment			X	
5.10	Provides technology infrastructure and equipment that is up-to-date and sufficient to accomplish the system's goals		X		
	<b>Support Systems</b>				
5.11	Provides and coordinates support services that meet the health, counseling, nutrition, safety, co-curricular, transportation, and special learning needs of all students			X	
5.12	Provides student support services coordinated with the school, home, and community			X	

**Definitions**

Not Evident	Little or no evidence exists
Emerging	Evidence indicates early or preliminary stages of implementation of practice
Operational	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are actively implemented
Highly Functional	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

**Focus Questions**

Please respond to the following questions regarding the processes that are in place to support the school system's implementation of the research-based practices outlined in the indicators rubric. Responses to these questions should support the school system's self-assessment on the indicators rubric. Be thorough and concise in your answers, focusing on quality and depth over quantity.

**1. What is the school system's process for recruitment, induction, placement, development, evaluation, and retention of qualified professional and support staff across the system and its schools?**

RCCSS recruits highly qualified staff by advertising positions on the school website, in local newspapers, church bulletins, SD State Department of Education teacher placement, the National Catholic Education Association website. The district also fields professional inquiries into our system, and recruits at select universities. In 2008 RCCSS entered into collaborative involvement with the Magis Program to hire young teachers who want to work in catholic education, through Creighton University. Hiring procedures, adopted by the board of education include screening applications, interviews, and reference and background checks. Every effort is made to hire highly qualified staff and to place them in their certified area. Staff requiring certification/endorsement is given support to obtain the necessary qualifications, and a deadline for certification completion.

The induction process for new staff consists of a full day in-service, including technology training on Grade Quick, EdLine, and Tech Paths curriculum mapping. Policy and

procedures are reviewed, and mentors are assigned. RCCSS salary schedule encourages coursework in research-based strategies by rewarding credits with pay increases. Teachers are offered opportunities to take continuing education in areas such as instructional strategies, differentiated instruction, technology use and integration, classroom management, bullying prevention, and other areas related to staff and student needs.

The evaluation process includes observation and evaluating new staff twice a year for the first two years of employment. The evaluation instrument for certified staff has been redesigned to focus on the school's Strategic Design Plan.

Professional development includes in-service for all staff as well as opportunities for individuals to request professional development leave and funding to participate in their area of study. The RCCSS 2009-2010 calendar includes four full in-service days and an additional five one-half day for professional development.

**2. How does the leadership ensure that the allocation of financial resources is supportive of the school system's vision, programs, services, and its plans for continuous improvement?**

The RCCSS Strategic Design Plan is utilized by the district as a decision screen when allocating resources. The district has an endowment fund to help support programs and services. An annual budget is established through the board finance committee, superintendent, and financial administrator with approval by the entire school board. An annual audit is conducted in late summer to early fall. A master facility plan has been developed by the RCCSS facilities committee who work in conjunction with the finance committee to identify funding to support these goals. Money is allocated to support and maintain the technology infrastructure throughout the district. The technology committee has updated a five-year plan.

Programs and services are provided to meet academic and social-emotional needs for students of the RCCSS. Two full-time counselors and a certified teacher serve at risk students.

**3. How does the school system ensure, support, and monitor the provision of resources and support services that meet the needs of all students?**

The RCCSS recognizes that students must have basic needs met in order to perform at the highest possible level. A crisis management plan is in place for emergencies. All teachers are provided with a crisis bag at the beginning of each school year which includes procedures for each emergency. RCCSS conducts fire, tornado, and lock down drills throughout the school year. A school liaison officer is available to the school system when a need arises. A Homeland Security grant was received for installing a card entrance system and cameras for both buildings. A security company is employed for overnight and weekend protection. The Diocese of Rapid City requires the implementation of a safe environment program to ensure all persons with access to children have undergone a background check and requires students to receive training on personal safety.

In alignment with the RCCSS mission statement, programs are offered that educate the “whole child” including but not limited to “See I Make All Things New,” (a Chastity Education Curriculum), Olweus Bullying Prevention, Safe & Drug Free Schools, etiquette classes, suicide prevention, and Love & Logic parenting classes. K-8 food services programs partners with the National School Lunch program and receives high rating on state inspections and meets the healthy nutritional needs of children.

## Stakeholder Communication & Relationships

**STANDARD: The system fosters effective communications and relationships with and among its stakeholders.**

Impact Statement: A system is successful in meeting this standard when it has the understanding, commitment, and support of stakeholders. System and school personnel seek opportunities for collaboration and shared leadership among stakeholders to help students learn and advance improvement efforts.

### Indicators Rubric

Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school system. The responses to the rubric should help the school system identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school system’s responses to the focus questions.

<b>INDICATORS</b>		<b>Not Evident</b>	<b>Emerging</b>	<b>Operational</b>	<b>Highly Functional</b>
<b>In fulfillment of this standard, the system:</b>					
6.1	Fosters collaboration with community stakeholders to support student learning			X	
6.2	Uses system-wide strategies to listen to and communicate with stakeholders			X	
6.3	Solicits the knowledge and skills of stakeholders to enhance the work of the system				X
6.4	Communicates the expectations for student learning and goals for improvement to all stakeholders			X	
6.5	Provides information that is meaningful and useful to stakeholders			X	

**Definitions**

Not Evident	Little or no evidence exists
Emerging	Evidence indicates early or preliminary stages of implementation of practice
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Highly Functional	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

**Focus Questions**

Please respond to the following questions regarding the processes that are in place to support the school system's implementation of the research-based practices outlined in the indicators rubric.

**1. How does the school system's leadership ensure that the system and its schools are responsive to community expectations and stakeholder satisfaction?**

School district parents, Rapid City community members, staff, and students developed the district Strategic Design Plan, which is posted on the district website. The Strategic Design Plan was reviewed in 2008-09.

A parent survey was conducted in the spring of 2007-08. The results showed a need for improved communication between home and school. As a result, RCCSS established EdLine, School Reach (phone system), school-wide system email, and an improved online newsletter. Additional communication tools include K-12 surveys, new programming in the child development department, and newsletter delivery opinions.

Communications are also made through, school board meetings, PTO, church bulletins, and the booster club. The district's website is continually updated and provides school information which includes event schedules, registration, staff contacts, the continuous improvement plan, test data, and school board minutes.

**2. What avenues are used to communicate information to stakeholders about the effectiveness of the school system and its schools, including the sharing of student performance results?**

The RCCSS office of development includes a Development Director and Assistant, with additional public relations duties. Communication regarding the school system is delivered from this office to alumni, donors, current families, staff members, as well as the Rapid City community at large, through newsletters, mailings, and gatherings. The Endowment for Excellence in Education annual report is prepared by the superintendent and development director and shared with all stakeholders. An annual audit of the RCCSS is available to those who desire this information. Communications occur via local and diocesan newspapers, radio, television, mailings, promotional publications, and web pages. At the beginning of every school year, orientations are provided for families of preschool through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students. These orientations provide information regarding school year events and expectations, as well as counselor reports on student performance data. The district has responded to the need for parents to monitor students' progress daily through the initiation of EdLine.

## Commitment to Continuous Improvement

**STANDARD: The system establishes, implements, and monitors a continuous process of improvement that focuses on student performance.**

Impact Statement: A system is successful in meeting this standard when it implements a collaborative and ongoing process for improvement that aligns the functions of the system with the expectations for student learning. Improvement efforts are sustained and the system and its schools demonstrate progress in improving student performance. New improvement efforts are informed by the results of earlier efforts through analysis of student performance, system effectiveness, and assessment of the improvement process.

### Indicators Rubric

Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school system. The responses to the rubric should help the school system identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school system’s responses to the focus questions.

<b>INDICATORS</b>		<b>Not Evident</b>	<b>Emerging</b>	<b>Operational</b>	<b>Highly Functional</b>
<b>In fulfillment of this standard, the system:</b>					
7.1	Engages in a continuous process of improvement that articulates the vision and purpose the system is pursuing (Vision); maintains a rich and current description of students, their performance, system effectiveness, and the community (Profile); employs goals and interventions to improve student performance (Plan); and documents and uses the results to inform future improvement efforts (Results)			X	
7.2	Engages stakeholders in the processes of continuous improvement			X	
7.3	Ensures that each school’s plan for continuous improvement is aligned with the system’s vision and expectations for student learning			X	
7.4	Ensures that each school’s plan for continuous improvement includes a focus on increasing learning for all students and closing gaps between current and expected student performance levels		X		
7.5	Provides research-based professional development for system and school personnel to help them achieve improvement goals			X	

7.6	Monitors and communicates the results of improvement efforts to stakeholders			X	
7.7	Evaluates and documents the effectiveness and impact of its continuous process of improvement		X		
7.8	Allocates and protects time for planning and engaging in continuous improvement efforts system-wide			X	
7.9	Provides direction and assistance to its schools and operational units to support their continuous improvement efforts			X	

**Definitions**

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Highly Functional	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

**Focus Questions**

Please respond to the following questions regarding the processes that are in place to support the school system’s implementation of the research-based practices outlined in the indicators rubric. Responses to these questions should support the school system’s self-assessment on the indicators rubric. Be thorough and concise in your answers, focusing on quality and depth over quantity.

**1. Describe the process for continuous improvement used by the school system and its schools and the impact of this process on student learning and system effectiveness.**

The Strategic Design Plan was developed with 100 plus local stakeholders. That plan is the decision screen that administrators use to guide continuous improvement. Student performance and effective teaching and learning are monitored through a variety of assessments, professional development, surveys, in-services, and data retreats. The performance results are used to determine interventions needed to improve student performance and to evaluate student achievement toward district goals. They are also used to assess the effectiveness of the curriculum and teaching strategies used by the staff. The RCCSS uses active Building Level Teams (BLT) comprised of teachers, administrators, parents, school board members, and priests of the diocese. The BLTs make recommendations based on the information gathered from annual data retreats.

RCCSS continuous improvement plan will include goals for student achievement in the areas of math and reading. Plans include the annual analysis of test data and the establishment of instructional strategies to improve student performance.

Staff is engaged in the process of curriculum mapping with the use of TechPaths and has horizontal and vertical dialogues with regard to their maps.

**2. What process is used to ensure that the improvement goals reflect student learning needs and are aligned with the vision and purpose of the school system and its schools?**

Curriculum mapping, vertical mapping discussions, data retreats, data analysis, and various assessments ensure that the continuous improvement plan goals address all identified student learning needs. Goals are revised to meet the vision and purpose of the district and its schools and are aligned to the state standards.

**3. What process is used to ensure that system and school personnel are provided professional development and technical assistance to implement interventions and achieve improvement goals?**

The district provides research-based training in strategies adopted and endorsed by the district, which encourages the development of individual teacher interests. For example, a specialist from the TIE office offered a workshop on reading in the content area for all high school faculty. At the elementary level, teachers are being trained through the SD Counts program which is a “three year initiative addressing the primary goals of the Governors 2010 Education Initiative, which is to ensure math and reading proficiency by third grade.” It builds teacher leaders who will train other teachers. Resources have been allocated, which have allowed for a systemic professional development plan.

**4. How does the leadership ensure that the improvement plan is implemented, monitored, achieved, and communicated to stakeholders?**

The administration oversees the continuous improvement process. Administrators and the BLTs, with faculty input, make recommendations based on information gathered from annual data retreats, which promote the attainment of building goals. Our Continuous Improvement Plans (CIP) is examined at faculty meetings, the data is disaggregated, and training is provided that address building goals. The RCCSS annually distributes the results of student achievement tests and reports progress on school improvement goals through the school district website, advertising and brochures, and individual achievement reports sent home. Our days begin with prayer along with a reminder of our mission.

**Catholic Identity**

**STANDARD: The system fosters Catholic Identity.**

INDICATORS		Not	Emerging	Operation	Highly Functional
<b>In fulfillment of this standard, the system:</b>					
8.1	Extends warm hospitality to everyone.			x	
8.2	Nurtures a “Catholic Imagination” which conveys the inherent goodness of creation and the active presence of God in everyday life (i.e., the “sacramentality” of life).			x	

8.3	Celebrates prayerfully our redemption in Christ Jesus through full, conscious and active participation in the Sacraments.				X	
8.4	Teaches clearly and comprehensively Catholic doctrine through a familiarity of Scripture and Tradition.					X
8.5	Introduces students to the witness of the saints.					X
8.6	Cultivates an awareness of the call to a personal encounter with Jesus Christ and to live as a member of the Church.					X
8.7	Expresses and advances a Catholic culture through common values, symbols, rituals, and patterns of thinking and acting.					X
8.8	Is committed to personal and academic excellence in the Catholic tradition which is centered on the liberal arts and promotes the total formation of the human person (mind, body, heart, and soul).					X
8.9	Promotes a synthesis of culture and faith. Cultivates the ability to think critically through the application of faith in every aspect of the curriculum.				X	
8.10	Nurtures growth of Christian virtues and knowledge illumined by faith.				X	
8.11	Recognizes parents as the primary teachers of their children, partners with them in the formation of our students, and supports the family as the domestic church.				X	
8.12	Forms a community animated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity.				X	
8.13	Educates and provides regular opportunities for students to participate in society as servant leaders who will lead an exemplary apostolic life and be a leaven of the Kingdom of God.					X
8.14	Promotes the spiritual and theological formation of the staff.				X	

**Definitions**

Not Evident	Little or no evidence exists
Emerging	Evidence indicates early or preliminary stages of implementation of practice
Operational	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are actively implemented
Highly Functional	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

**Description of the School System’s Methods for Quality Assurance**

Provide a brief description of the school system’s processes for quality assurance. Please answer the following questions in the description:

- What processes does the district use to monitor and document improvement?
- How does the district provide meaningful feedback and support to its schools and across the district?
- How does the district ensure that the AdvancED standards are met by all the schools and the district as a whole?
- How does the district regularly collect, use, and communicate results?

Rapid City Catholic School System employs several different means to monitor the quality of our system. The Strategic Design Plan was developed in 2002. This project involved over 100 people coming together for two days. We articulated our vision and developed a Strategic Plan based on our core values, beliefs' and mission. Since 2006 the NCA process has assisted us in evaluating this document. Quality assurance efforts include supervision for alignment process; data retreats; staff movement to highly qualified (currently about 97%), building level teams, standards groupings; environmental improvements (security system and facilities upgrades); the development of St. Martin's Monastery staffing improvements; staff benefits; technology growth; and monthly K-12 meetings.

In the Fall of 2006, Dr. Angie Koppang discussed the AdvancED process at the System's Change Conference in Chamberlin, SD. Eleven RCCSS representatives attended, and a leadership team was created to begin the accreditation process. Dr. Koppang assessed our system readiness and presented information to the faculty and staff in the spring of 2007. RCCSS leadership team members facilitate and work toward improving indicators within each of the standards. Monthly system meetings keep the faculty and staff abreast of changes in the system's standards. In addition, in the fall of 2008, Dr. Chuck Schwahn assessed the progress of the Strategic Design Plan. His recommendation was to continue with our strengths and to put emphasis on the area of technology, particularly Mass Customized Learning.

The RCCSS collects data on a continual basis to evaluate district needs. This data is used to assess student achievement, guide curriculum development, design professional development opportunities, and provide stakeholder feedback. This includes data which may be compiled through surveys, such as on-line stakeholder surveys. An example of this was a parent survey to our K-12 parents to assess the support for purchasing St. Martin's Academy for future school development. The administration utilizes data from a variety of assessments to determine the needs of our students and guide professional development. In June 2008, a PD workshop revealed a need to focus in the area of math, which resulted in a district-wide goal for improvement in mathematics. Collected data are reviewed by the staff, parents, administration, board, and the Bishop. Furthermore, results are communicated through Edline, website, mailings, newsletter, and parent orientations. The RCCSS uses more assessments than are required for accreditation by the State of South Dakota. It is our belief that multiple assessments inform instruction and relieve anxiety related to college entrance exams. Accountability to the stakeholders, including parents and the board, prove strong motivators for continuous improvement.

### **Peer to Peer Program**

Rapid City Catholic School System (RCCSS) has recently implemented a cross-age mentoring program called TLC (Teen Life Choices). This program matches high school students with specific middle school classes and middle school students with specific 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade classes. The focus is on building relationships, helping mentees understand their value and the importance of making healthy life choices, and facilitating character development that aligns with our strategic plan. It also provides leadership training for the mentors in this program.

Last March the high school and the middle school principals selected and took six leaders in tenth and seventh grades to a day-long conference in which students take on a leadership role in

their school communities to fight drug and alcohol abuse. After the conference, the students felt that there needed to be a group in the school who was interested in being role models and mentors to younger students in our school community. The students also felt that drug and alcohol abuse were not the only destructive decisions that teens face. With that in mind, they increased the mentoring scope to include guidance in moral development.

This fall, volunteers from the 11<sup>th</sup> grade student body and the 8<sup>th</sup> grade student body have taken a formal written pledge. They will act as role models to their peers and the younger children in our school community and will strive to be a living example for them. They also pledge to make healthy choices in their lives that fit with our Mission Statement of Developing Personal and Academic Excellence in the Catholic tradition. At least two 11<sup>th</sup> grade members are assigned to a middle school homeroom class (6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, & 8<sup>th</sup> grade) of approximately twenty students and at least two 8<sup>th</sup> grade members are assigned to a 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> grade class of approximately twenty students. TLC members select and present a topic every month and facilitate 30-minute class meetings where all students are encouraged to ask questions and have discussion regarding the topic area. Some of the topics selected for this year are Gossip is Deadly; Take Responsibility for Yourself; Are you a Bully?; Don't Harm Your Body; Talent Minus Hard Work Equals Zero Success; and It's All About Choices. TLC Members meet twice before the class presentations to design the class lesson plan and to discuss ways involve students with the topic.

Program advisors, Keiz Shultz (middle school principal) and Katie Falkowski (district campus ministry director), meet separately with high school members and middle school members to provide structure and guidance in the program. It is the intent of RCCSS that this program continues every year by incorporating new 11<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students into the leadership and mentoring roles. Specific class meeting dates have been set for the third Tuesday of the month to provide continuity. Classroom teachers stay in the classrooms during the class meetings in a monitoring capacity.

According to MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership, at this time there has been little research done on the success of cross-age peer mentors working with multiple youth in a group mentoring format. Most cross-age mentoring programs (CAMPs) are designed around an older youth, typically high school-aged, who is paired or matched with an elementary or middle school-aged child. However, one of the leading researchers in teen mentoring from the University of Texas at San Antonio, Michal Karcher, suggests that research on the benefits of such programs may be examined from seemingly disparate fields, such as peer counseling, peer assistance, and peer education. According to his work, *Research in Action, Cross-Age Peer Mentoring* (2007), cross-age peer mentoring programs that utilize structure, meet for more than ten meetings, do not focus primarily on deficit or problem reduction, and require an age span of at least two years have yielded positive effects for both mentors and mentees alike. Small single-site randomized studies have revealed consistently positive findings for mentees in attitudes toward and connectedness to school and peers (Karcher, 2005a; Bowman & Myrick, 1987; Stoltz, 2005), self-efficacy (Stoltz, 2005; Tomlin, 1994), grades or academic achievement (Karcher, Davis & Powell, 2002; Stoltz, 2005; Tomlin, 1994; Westerman, 2002), social skills (Karcher, 2005) and behavior problems (Bowman & Myrick, 1987), as well as gains in conventional attitudes toward illicit and antisocial behavior (Sheehan, KiCara, LeBailly, & Christoffel, 1999). For mentors, Ikard (2001) found improvements in moral reasoning and empathy and Noll (1997) noted “volunteers reported such beneficial advantages as the ability to

relate better to parents, and increase in self-esteem, better conflict resolution skills, and enhanced organization skills”(p. 241). Also noted in Research in Action was that some cautionary reports suggest that the effects of these programs shrink or become negative when insufficient training and monitoring are in place.

RCCSS feels that the TLC program will benefit both the mentors and the mentees in this dynamic peer-to-peer mentoring relationship. Not only does it provide a wonderful opportunity for students to learn leadership and serve as role models for younger students, but it also provides a positive and supportive environment for students to discuss difficult social issues and develop a stronger moral foundation. The goals of TLC are congruent with the RCCSS Strategic Design for the development of our students morally and within the global environment of community and faith.

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## Conclusion

### Focus Questions

Please respond to the following focus questions. The questions reflect the school system's overall analysis of their internal evaluation of the accreditation standards.

- 1. As you review your responses to the standards, what major trends, themes, or areas of focus emerge that cut across the seven standards?**

The reoccurring themes from our standards review are funding, affordability, technology, facilities, data driven curriculum, and communication. Funding provides a challenge in all areas; however, the generosity and gifts of our benefactors and outside grant resources provide needed support. Vast improvements have been made in the areas of technology and resources. Our instructional delivery is improving as the technology plan comes into focus. The acquisition of St. Martins Monastery is a good step toward overcoming our facilities limitations, and the use of data is becoming more influential in driving curriculum. Improved communication has helped stakeholders to gain a clearer understanding of how the RCCSS operates. This has translated into a deeper respect for the roles everyone plays in our system.

- 2. Based on your review of these cross-cutting themes/trends and each of the seven standards, what would you consider to be your school system's greatest strengths?**

The RCCSS has a dynamic community that works together for the benefit of the entire system. The faculty, staff, students, and parents of our system are a major strength. Developing these relationships has fostered the support needed to address the aforementioned themes. This is evidenced by tremendous parent volunteerism and philanthropy. The involvement of our parents aids in reducing costs and keeping expectations high. Our local priests and parishes support us spiritually and financially. The common goal of "Developing Personal and Academic Excellence in the Catholic Tradition" is shared by all. The Holy Spirit is working in the lives of individuals affecting the positive communal culture of our district.

- 3. What would you consider to be your school system's greatest challenges?**

The three greatest challenges are facilities, enrollment management, and funding. Due to increased enrollment K-8, many regular-sized classrooms have been segregated into two smaller classrooms. Middle school technology and physical education programs are administered in another building. Elementary and middle schools share gym and theatre space with the school lunch and athletic programs. The acquisition of St. Martin's Monastery is one step toward overcoming our facilities limitations. Renovations to this property will be costly. Securing funding to complete the project is currently underway. Currently, 75% of our operating budget is realized through student tuition. Maintaining and increasing student enrollment is critical to financial solvency. Faculty retention is being addressed through the goal of an increase in benefits and wage parity with the public sector.

**4. How will you use the insights gained from this self-assessment to inform and enhance your quality assurance and continuous improvement efforts?**

This process has already enlightened us to many of the ways RCCSS needs improvement. The last two years have been intense in the quantity and quality of work completed to prepare for the onsite visit. Standardized reports provide evidence that our system graduates academically well-qualified students. Furthermore, research shows that Catholic school graduates are civically engaged. Participation in the AdvancED process has shown us that the RCCSS has made great progress in moving from good to great.