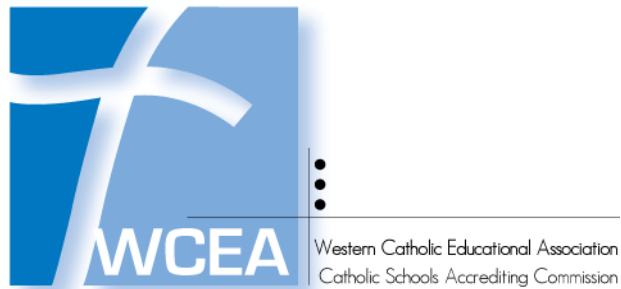


# ***REPORT OF FINDINGS***

Our Lady of the Snows School  
E443  
1125 Lander Street  
Reno, NV 89509  
DIOCESE OF RENO



**IMPROVING STUDENT LEARNING 2012**

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

**OCTOBER 26-27, 2021**

# ***REPORT OF FINDINGS***

for  
Our Lady of the Snows School  
E443

---

Julie Cantillon, PhD  
Associate Director of Schools  
Diocese of San Diego  
619-318-1057

---

Brianne Thoreson  
Bishop Manogue  
Diocese of Reno

---

Carlye Pagni  
St. Albert the Great Catholic School  
Diocese of Reno

---

Roxana Gutierrez  
Little Flower Catholic School  
Diocese of Reno

---

Jodi Potter  
St. Albert the Great Catholic School  
Diocese of Reno

---

Bonnie Silsby  
St Teresa of Avila Catholic School  
Diocese of Reno

## **PREFACE**

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

The team found our three days at Our Lady of the Snows School professionally rich and personally rewarding. We experienced a community where everyone is striving to provide a Catholic environment where quality education is a priority.

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

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

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **A. How the Self Study was Conducted**

Our Lady of the Snows School began the formal Self Study process in August 2020 using the 2012 Improving Student Learning (ISL) protocol. The principal and vice principal met with the diocesan superintendent for preliminary training and to determine the organizational approach to the Self Study process. The principal and vice principal created a timeline and schedule of meetings that was presented to the faculty at their initial staff meeting for the 2020-21 school year. The superintendent provided a whole staff training on the 2012 ISL protocol and Self Study process in mid-September. Following this meeting, the school faculty divided themselves into teams and each team selected a section of chapter three that was most relevant to them. Each team was assigned a meeting date and given the responsibility to facilitate staff discussion and analysis for a section of chapter three and write their findings.

For the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year, the staff of Our Lady of the Snows School met weekly to work on the different sections in chapter two and three and eventually, in late spring, on chapter four of this Self Study. The staff reserved Friday afternoons for these meetings due to the modified COVID school schedule. These meetings took a workshop format. The study was assembled, section by section, by the entire faculty. At the end of the draft writing of chapters two and three, the teams peer-edited the sections that were completed by other teams. Progress on the Self Study was reported by the principal to the school board and pastor at their monthly meetings during the 2020-2021 school year.

Upon completion of the drafts of chapters two and three, as well as review of assessment data and survey results, the faculty met in late spring of 2021. They reviewed each section of the document, focusing on the significant accomplishments and goals. From this, they drafted three goals that best represented the findings of the Self Study and will have the greatest impact on

continued improvement of student learning. The staff met again in August of 2021 to complete the Action Plan.

At the beginning of September of the 2021-2022 school year, the document was presented to the pastor, school board, and at a parent-teacher organization (PTO) meeting for review and comment. The Self Study was posted on the school website for all to review. Notification was sent to all community shareholders and final feedback was requested. The Self Study was submitted to the WCEA commissioner for review and a final Action Plan was written.

Our Lady of the Snows School completed the Self Study as scheduled. The primary obstacle the school faced was having limited access to shareholders due to the COVID restrictions in place. However, the school continued to solicit parent and other shareholder feedback through the use of digital surveys. Additionally, the accreditation visit was pushed to earlier in the year in consultation with the commissioner, so the school needed to complete this within a 12-month timeline.

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

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

The Visiting Committee observed Our Lady of the Snows School was effective in involving all shareholders in the Self Study process. The school began the formal Self Study process following the WCEA 2012 ISL protocol in the fall of the 2020-2021 school year. In accord with both the directives and the intent of the protocol, the school endeavored to include shareholders in all steps of the process and to keep them informed about the work the faculty was doing. Systemic analysis of the school's effectiveness will continue to be shared via printed and online communications as well as via PTO and board meetings.

Having the in-person participation of shareholders was more complicated this particular year because of the COVID protocols mandated for the school. Our Lady of the Snows School has a very active and supportive PTO. However, the PTO did not hold meetings during the Self Study writing year due to the COVID protocols. Parents were asked to complete surveys and the school received thoughtful feedback from the 163 families that participated. Students were also involved in the Self Study through their participation in school surveys. The results of all these surveys were presented by the administration, discussed in staff meetings, and incorporated into the Self Study, as appropriate.

During the 2020-2021 school year the staff met weekly to discuss and draft the school's Self Study. Faculty teams facilitated discussions, wrote rough drafts that were posted on a shared Google document, elicited feedback, and drafted a final submission. In the initial phases of discussion and drafting of the document, the faculty provided most of the input and structure for the final document. The principal and vice principal guided the process and managed the timeline, provided updates, and facilitated discussions with the pastor and school board.

Our Lady of the Snows School worked to make this Self Study process a time of growth and a time to further build the school's partnership with its parents and other shareholders. All suggestions and input were welcomed. The school feels this process produced a more connected sharing of information between the school and its shareholders and believes this enhanced level of engagement will continue to help Our Lady of the Snows School support the high achievement of all students.

## **Chapter 2: Context of the School**

### **A. School Profile**

Our Lady of the Snows School is in the old southwest section of Reno and is centrally located to serve not only students from within the Our Lady of the Snows Parish but also students from other parts of Reno and Sparks. Our Lady of the Snows School is primarily a commuter school. Approximately 95% of the students commute from neighboring areas. The school population is currently reflective of the local community and parish: 79% White, 9% Hispanic, 3% Asian, and 9% Multi-racial. Seventy-five percent of Our Lady of the Snows School students are Catholic. The pastor indicated that the school and parish would like to do more outreach in order to welcome a more diverse student population as Reno's demographics are changing. To this end, the pastor is working with a consultant on developing strategies for welcoming a younger and more diverse parishioner base.

Survey results from shareholders (i.e., faculty, students, parents, school board, and pastor) indicate a high level of satisfaction with Our Lady of the Snows School. According to the surveys, parents' number one reason for sending their child to Our Lady of the Snows School was "Academic Excellence" which was followed closely by "Catholic Values." Parent surveys in the areas of academics, school environment, and Catholic Identity were positive with most responses rating these areas "Effective" or "Very Effective." Parent satisfaction in curricular subjects was very high in math, reading, language arts, and religion. However, there was a modest drop in parent satisfaction in science and social studies. These areas were still rated by 82-84% of parents as "Effective" or "Very Effective" and have been addressed via the school's Action Plan.

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

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

The Visiting Committee observed Our Lady of the Snows School was highly effective at using prior accreditation findings to drive school improvement. The school was successful at completing goals from the previous Action Plan. The findings of the 2016 Visiting Committee guided Our Lady of the Snows School in focusing on three of the five goals originally written as

Critical Goals. The previous Visiting Committee also suggested that, in addition to the three goals identified as a focus for the next accreditation cycle, the school should expand the goal for professional development to include an emphasis on maximizing the use of technology as a teaching and learning tool. Progress toward meeting these goals was reported in the annual progress reports submitted to the Diocese of Reno. The Visiting Committee recommends also formally documenting progress toward goals through the PLC (Professional Learning Community) process. Ongoing work toward these goals has resulted in meeting specific objectives, which have improved student learning at Our Lady of the Snows School.

**Goal 1: Our Lady of the Snows School will provide an appropriate level of support for both students and teachers so that all students show at least one year's growth year to year.**

Our Lady of the Snows School held weekly PLC meetings for training and collaboration of staff to ensure that the needs of all students were being identified and met. The school established a training schedule of weekly meetings to address assessment data, scheduled early release days to bring in trainers, provided training opportunities outside the local area, and set yearly goals for every student at the beginning of the year.

Through weekly PLCs, Our Lady of the Snows School brought in various outside facilitators to increase teacher capacity in this area. Utilizing the PLC structure, the staff met to disaggregate and analyze various forms of data. The staff used testing and anecdotal data to set goals for individual students and classes. Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) quadrant reports helped to identify trends. Although not every student made a year's growth every year, overall classes exceeded growth projections.

When a student did not meet his/her projected growth, enrichment or intervention was provided. Enrichment strategies included Khan Academy, IXL, peer tutoring, volunteers to work in small groups, book clubs, and Accelerated Reader (AR) to provide exposure to above grade level concepts. In addition, middle school students were placed in advanced courses. Intervention strategies included parent/teacher conferences, extra small group instruction, Title I tutoring, study hall opportunities, and referrals to the intervention specialist. Continual improvement in teacher training and a variety of student supports enables the school to meet the needs of all learners and assist students in their growth.

**Additional Goal: Our Lady of the Snows School will have an annual schedule of structured and focused professional development activities, driven by the needs ascertained through assessment analysis and teacher feedback.**

Driven by the needs ascertained through assessment analysis and teacher feedback, Our Lady of the Snows School implemented an annual schedule of structured and focused professional development activities. Professional development included an emphasis on maximizing the use of technology as a teaching and learning tool. Advancements in technology and the importance of 21st century skills coupled with COVID led to accelerated growth in this area. Distance learning enabled staff to hone in on professional development directly related to technology and communications and therefore support high achievement for all students.

**Goal 2: Our Lady of the Snows School will improve their writing scores so that all students will show at least one year's growth year to year in the subject of writing.**

The school took several steps during the last six years to improve all students' writing abilities so that there would be demonstrated growth. Our Lady of the Snows School adopted the MyAccess Writing Program, a web-based instructional program which scores student responses to writing prompts for grades three through eight. The baseline assessment for the effectiveness of MyAccess was measured by the ACT/Aspire summative assessment. However, the ACT/Aspire assessment became unavailable in 2017 when they no longer scored writing as part of the ACT/Aspire battery. Teachers were still able to utilize MyAccess as a formative assessment. Students in grades three through eight complete benchmark assessments on MyAccess in the genres of narrative, opinion, and expository writing to evaluate student growth. Students' writing assessments are included in the student portfolios so teachers and students can see evidence of longitudinal growth.

Our Lady of the Snows School teachers in kindergarten through second grade worked to improve students' writing scores so that all students demonstrated growth. Teachers in kindergarten through second grade focused on conducting a writer's workshop at least three times per week. Students in grades kindergarten through second grade completed written benchmark assessments in the genres of narrative, opinion, and expository to evaluate student growth. Each benchmark piece was scored by two teachers using the developed and agreed upon rubrics. Writing assessments are included in the student portfolios so that longitudinal growth can be observed.

Grades three through eight utilized the MyAccess rubrics, while kindergarten through second grades adopted the rubrics from the Becoming a Writer program. Both rubrics are similar in that they focus on writing traits and genres. These rubrics allowed students across grade levels to hone in on specific areas to develop their writing.

While the school recognizes the need to assess progress, teachers also acknowledge the need to support organization of thought and creative expression. Staff worked together through professional development meetings to foster these qualities. These action steps resulted in an increase in writing across the curriculum in all grade levels, increased frequency of writing across all genres, participation in writing contests, and immediate feedback for both teachers and students.

**Goal 3: Our Lady of the Snows School will integrate art and music into the academic curriculum for all grades in order to enrich learning, best meet the SLEs, and support differentiated learning in the classroom.**

Over the last six years, Our Lady of the Snows School integrated art and music into the academic curriculum for all grades. The integration of art and music looked different in each grade band with a focus on continuing to educate the whole child. The teachers communicate through PLC meetings to ensure that students are exposed to art and music across the curriculum. This helps

meet the needs of students' different learning styles. Rather than providing specific training to classroom teachers, Our Lady of the Snows School hired a music teacher trained in Orff, a Loyola Press presenter for art instruction, and a technology teacher who integrates art and music through technology. The fine arts teachers are also in constant communication with classroom teachers to plan lessons that connect with the content and standards in each classroom.

Music and art help strengthen connections between the school and parish community. The church music director and the school music teacher collaborate for choirs at Wednesday school Mass and seasonal music presentations throughout the year. The church music director provides teachers with music for the weekly mass so that students are prepared to participate in the weekly Mass. Art teachers help design and implement class projects used as auction items for various parish and school fundraisers. Classroom teachers observe and engage with art, music, and Kidscape instructors, strengthening their own confidence and abilities in these targeted areas. There is significant collaboration between teachers and intentional integration of the arts in the academic program of the school.

Our Lady of the Snows School has systematically addressed the goals identified in its Action Plan and made great progress in meeting those goals over the past six years. Over this period, the teachers, administrators, students, and parents have all worked together to improve student learning and build a positive, collaborative learning community. The school has been successful in improving their use of assessment data to drive instruction and professional development. They have incorporated music and art into the curriculum. Success in this endeavor is reflected in not only parents, student, and staff satisfaction surveys, but also in the support of time and talent that Our Lady of the Snows School receives from many different shareholders.

## **Chapter 3: Quality of the School Program**

### **A. Assessment of the School's Catholic Identity**

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

The Visiting Committee observed that Our Lady of the Snows School is highly effective in assessing its Catholic Identity. The school has worked to form students, staff, and parents in their faith through not only the religious curriculum offered, but also opportunities for the community as a whole to pray, celebrate the sacraments, and learn about the parish. The school has also identified a need to increase their service project offerings; parents and faculty expressed an understanding of service projects as a basis for their students' ongoing spiritual growth and are excited for more opportunities.

The school's daily morning gatherings and SLEs in the lesson plans, as well as the prayer centers in the classrooms, all contribute to the strength of the Catholic Identity. Our Lady of the Snows School attends weekly Mass on Wednesdays, where students, staff, parents and faculty participate. The school mission is displayed in every classroom, and bulletin boards show



seasonal religious projects for each class. Our Lady of the Snows School recognizes students by giving Snowflake Awards to those who model the SLEs.

Our Lady of the Snows School's religion curriculum is based on *Finding God* (Loyola Press) and *Growing Together: Ministry to Children* which are aligned with the Diocese of Cincinnati standards. Teachers supplement the curriculum with other resources, websites, videos and activities that enrich their lessons. Student progress of the religion curriculum is monitored by lesson assessments, and the school administers the ACRE assessment to the fifth and eighth grades annually. The scores on the ACRE test are a reflection of their continued effort to grow and improve their curriculum. One of the areas Our Lady of the Snows School has identified for growth based on the ACRE exam student responses relates to student cursing and swearing.

Our Lady of the Snows School participates in multiple projects throughout the school year to show their involvement in their community, making a statement on their concern for social service. They also organize seasonal activities to celebrate the Catholic calendar including performances, celebration of the sacraments, retreats, First Communion, and many other activities that show growth in their Catholic Identity.

Teachers and staff at Our Lady of the Snows School participate in the annual diocesan conference, school retreats, parish faith formation, and catechist classes held in-person or online. Ninety-four percent of the Our Lady of the Snows School full-time teachers are catechist certified. The staff at the school recognize the need for more opportunities in their faith formation, and they are continuously looking for resources to enrich their curriculum.

## **B. Defining the School's Purpose**

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

The Visiting Committee observed Our Lady of the Snows School to be highly effective at defining the school's purpose. The school's mission statement and philosophy embody the Catholic teaching of the church to love God, love their neighbor, and serve others to build a sense of community within the school. Our Lady of the Snows School is committed to creating an environment where students can use their God-given talents and skills. The SLEs at Our Lady of the Snows School are organized into the following categories: Faith, Knowledge, Leadership, and Service. These are directly tied to the school's mission statement and help define the school's purpose. Currently, Our Lady of the Snows School uses the Diocese of Reno Standards which are adapted from the Nevada State Standards. The mission statement and the standards act as guidelines for student learning and SLEs which are fostered by all shareholders.

Our Lady of the Snows School communicates to parents in a variety of ways: texts, emails, newsletters, conferences, parent nights, and phone calls. Through the various means of communication, parents are informed of students' academic progress and spiritual growth as they

relate to the SLEs. The school community encourages personal interaction with the SLEs by recognizing students and staff members who exhibit SLE behaviors with Snowflake Awards. Snowflake Awards are incorporated into the school's daily life and are made visible to everyone. The Visiting Committee observed bulletin boards in the building where Snowflake Awards are posted and also viewed the awards being given to students during their morning assembly. The SLEs are present around the school and are in students' homework folders. The Visiting Committee observed the SLEs posted in each classroom for students to reference, and parents mentioned how students discuss the SLEs at home.

In 2014-15, Our Lady of the Snows School revised the mission statement, and the school spent a great deal of time writing the SLEs to be easily understood and adaptable to all grade levels. All teachers ensured that assessment of the SLEs was age appropriate by developing rubrics for each grade band. One goal discovered by the school was to place more emphasis on the importance of the mission statement and how it connects to students' growth.

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

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

The Visiting Committee observed Our Lady of the Snows School to be effective in its organizational structures to support student learning and high achievement of all students. The school has a strong promotion of its Catholic Identity and communication of high achievement to all shareholders. It is particularly strong in promoting academic achievement in all students; at every level, it is evident that the academic achievement of students is a priority and all community members work together to make sure students are achieving. The vast educational and institutional knowledge, as well as dedication of the school's principal and vice principal is outstanding and highly recognized by parents and faculty. For the continued growth and success of the school, consideration should be given to formalizing the actions and processes both of these individuals follow that make this school excellent.

Our Lady of the Snows School has a very strong Catholic Identity. Classroom prayer corners or tables, classroom prayer, and routine classroom procedures all include activities (regular and specific) that help students remember, learn, and explore the Catholic faith. Hallway decor and icons support the visual representation of Catholic Identity, and the school-wide prayer opportunities at the beginning of the day and the end of the day remind students how to start and end their time together. Parents are invited to participate in this faith life through weekly newsletters from the pastor, updates on the parish community from the pastor, opportunities to celebrate Mass and other sacraments with the students, and reminders about the liturgical year through service projects.

Our Lady of the Snows School, as a community of parents and teachers, is very focused on student learning and achievement. There are multiple structures in place to promote the successful learning and achievement of all students. There is an intervention specialist who

addresses speech, language, and reading needs at all grade levels and does social interventions with children on the spectrum. There are also classroom instructional assistants, many of whom are certified teachers, in all of the elementary grade levels, and there is an individual instructional assistant for a student in one of the 1-2 classrooms. Integrated Multi-Age Grouping in Education (IMAGE) classrooms in grades 1-2 and 3-4 allow for flexibility to address student academic performance and need, and the combined seventh and eighth grade classrooms as well as multiple levels of middle school mathematics allow for individualized instruction in almost all areas of study.

The school uses newsletters, policy manuals, PTO meetings, parent/teacher nights, and parent/teacher conferences to communicate with families. There are regular opportunities for parent interaction and plenty of knowledge regarding programs, opportunities for support, and opportunities for growth. Teachers communicate with parents through RenWeb (posted grades, posted work, posted lesson plans) and weekly folders home (elementary level).

The Visiting Committee clarified the rationale behind the goal included in this section for the new social studies and science standards, recognizing the need for a shared understanding of the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and the new Nevada Academic Content Standards for Social Studies across grade levels. This includes the integration of their current Peace and Justice standards into the new social studies standards.

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

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

The Visiting Committee found Our Lady of the Snows School to be effective with data collection, analysis, and communication. The school utilizes a multitude of tools to analyze student standards as well as summative and formative performance data. With this knowledge, curricular decisions and student intervention or advancement strategies are developed. Parents are kept informed regarding student performance on MAP assessments as well as if intervention or enrichment is recommended by the school. It is the recommendation of the Visiting Committee that the school annually share delineated longitudinal test data with all families via an annual report or a state of the school address.

Our Lady of the Snows School uses a selection of programs and assessments to collect student achievement data. Teachers and staff meet weekly in PLCs to disaggregate and analyze data as a complete staff and as grade-level bands. It is recommended the school maintain minutes from all of their PLC meetings in a shared drive or folder. Faculty uses data analysis to focus on ways to improve current instruction, as well as find areas to add additional support. Our Lady of the Snows School communicates with parents the results of the assessments. In turn, parents can track their children's growth at the school and provide additional support if needed. The Visiting Committee viewed reports on individual student data and class data. Students are tracked longitudinally to ensure adequate growth is achieved. Our Lady of the Snows School prioritizes not only the academic achievement of all students but the social-emotional needs of its students

as well. In 2020-2021, students in the junior high completed surveys on their emotional needs and peer groups. The staff disaggregated the data of the surveys, created a sociogram, and placed students in classes with peers who had similar needs. This work is to be commended, especially during the challenging time of COVID.

Our Lady of the Snows School is a data-driven school that collects data using a variety of programs. Many of the programs Our Lady of the Snows School uses are via computer adaptive software. With the use of online platforms, Our Lady of the Snows School can easily assess students on a variety of subjects. Teachers can frequently monitor the effectiveness of the delivery and understanding of current curriculums with the results of these assessments. Many of the programs provide immediate results and, because of this, teachers can quickly adjust their teaching to better meet the needs of students. With the use of the digital learning tools and assessments used at Our Lady of the Snows School, teachers can remediate, review, and enrich instruction. The Visiting Committee observed students utilizing computer adaptive software throughout the school day. Students worked at their individual levels on math and reading assignments. Teachers integrate the data collected from the MAP testing to level the students in the various platforms.

When analyzing the assessment data of its students, Our Lady of the Snows School saw a need for an intervention specialist. The school hired an intervention specialist, who is also a speech pathologist. She works with students in small groups on specific goals and with students one-on-one. She aids in the data collection by administering multiple assessments to assist teachers and staff with meeting the needs of all students. While observing the school, the Visiting Committee witnessed one-on-one instruction and push-in support from the invention specialist. The lessons supported the classroom teachers in their abilities to meet the needs of all students. Our Lady of the Snows School also saw a need to create libraries for guided reading instruction. The Visiting Committee observed the use of Developmental Reading Assessments (DRA) levels in the classroom libraries and the school library.

Through the disaggregation of data, Our Lady of the Snows School identified a need for more individualized math instruction. Students are now assessed in grades fifth through eighth in mathematics. The results of these assessments are used to place the students in one of four math courses. By offering four math courses, Our Lady of the Snows School can meet the academic needs of the lowest and highest achieving students. Students experiencing difficulty in mathematics in fifth and sixth grades have access to a mathematics resource teacher for individual math intervention. Advanced students in fifth and sixth grades are provided an opportunity to take advanced math classes. Teachers review test scores, grades, and teacher recommendations to make the determinations on class placement. The Visiting Committee observed the students working in mathematics at their individual levels. Having several modalities of instruction, students remain engaged, while their educational needs are being addressed.

Along with academic assessments, Our Lady of the Snows School assesses students on their faith formation and spiritual growth. Students in the fifth and eighth grades take the Assessment of Children/Youth Religious Education (ACRE) assessment. The staff reviews the data to determine the effectiveness of the school's religious education curriculum. The Visiting Committee

recommends that future analysis of the ACRE be part of a structured process that includes all grade levels and an emphasis on identifying trends.

Our Lady of the Snows School acknowledges that the school's current instructional materials need to be reviewed and aligned with the current standards and student achievement. The staff would like to explore available instructional materials that can better meet the needs of the students at Our Lady of the Snows School. In doing this, the school can create a more consistent school-wide curriculum. The school has adopted a learning model that involves IMAGE classes which are composed of two grade levels. Aligning the standards would guarantee that all areas of focus are taught and assessed within these groupings.

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

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

The Visiting Committee observed that Our Lady of the Snows School is highly effective in measuring high achievement of all students toward defined SLEs and curriculum standards. The curriculum standards are adapted from the Common Core State Standards with an emphasis on Catholic values as set forth by the Diocese of Reno. Catholic values have been incorporated into the curriculum through the SLEs, daily Snowflake Awards, religion class, and Mass participation. The Visiting Committee observed prayer tables in each classroom with the appropriate liturgical color, crucifix, icons, and sacramentals.

Student portfolios allow Our Lady of the Snows School to ensure that the curriculum is challenging and relevant for all students. Portfolios track student growth from year to year. MAP test scores are used to help teachers evaluate and improve curriculum as discussed in PLCs. MAP scores are used to individualize instruction by inputting data into computer adaptive software such as IXL and Khan Academy, which creates an individualized program for each child. IMAGE classes create a natural environment for curriculum differentiation. These programs measure student achievement towards the SLEs and content standards. The Visiting Committee observed teachers transitioning seamlessly between grade level content within the same class.

Acceptable progress is measured through a variety of assessment methods including ACT/Aspire Aspire, MAP testing, and diagnostic tests by teachers. Individual portfolios travel from one grade to the next as a means of assessing student needs. Several online tools are used as a resource to demonstrate student understanding. New technological tools and software were identified through the PLC process in order to meet the needs of all students during the pandemic.

Our Lady of the Snows School has implemented plans to assist students who have been identified as not making acceptable progress. Students are identified by formative and summative assessments. IMAGE classes meet the needs of individual students through differentiation. The student assistance team, intervention specialist, and instructional assistants work directly with these students in both small groups and one-on-one for direct instruction.

Students are provided opportunities for both support and enrichment. The Visiting Committee observed teachers and instructional assistants working with small groups and individual students, including a student in a 1-2 IMAGE class with a one-on-one instructional assistant for support. Communication with parents regarding instructional planning takes place through Renweb.

The Visiting Committee observed student understanding and engagement through a variety of instructional techniques. Teachers were observed using a variety of instructional techniques including whole group instruction, small group instruction, one-on-one instruction, group and partner work, and the use of individual Chromebooks for computer adaptive software.

The Visiting Committee observed evidence of the SLEs in classrooms through posters as well as student artwork displayed in the classrooms. SLEs are woven into the lessons; a teacher was observed calling on students to share an SLE that demonstrates what they are working on. The teacher pointed out that a student “puts faith into action” when complimenting a friend who was making a good choice. Student projects displayed also show Catholic Identity in what the students know and are learning in religion; it was evident in the lower grades that the students understood the story of creation through artwork depicting Adam and Eve, as well as student work of Noah’s Ark. The SLEs were observed in action when students in one class were writing about Good Deed Monday; the class had made pumpkin loaves wrapped with stickers containing Bible verses, and students chose someone to share it with. They were asked to write about who they gave it to and why, and who needed to be lifted up.

## **F. Instructional Methodology to Support High Achievement of All Students**

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

The Visiting Committee observed Our Lady of the Snows School to be highly effective in instructional methodology to support high achievement of all students. Through their innovative implementation of IMAGE classrooms, ongoing staff development, and various forms of classroom instruction, Our Lady of the Snows School exhibits an academic as well as spiritual culture to support all students. The school has fully integrated technology into the learning process and modifies instruction based on various assessments to meet the needs of all students.

The staff at Our Lady of the Snows School model Catholic values in many ways. They embrace the SLEs of Faith, Knowledge, Leadership, and Service and promote these to students through various means. The Visiting Committee observed the school praying at the beginning and end of the day, as well as sixth graders participating in a campus ministry event at the parish center. Teachers connect the SLEs to their lessons and point out real-life examples through their interactions and observations with students. The staff take an active role in promoting the faith with their students. The pastor and principal support the ongoing faith education of the staff through retreats, an annual diocesan conference, as well as faith formation at the parish or diocesan level. Members of the staff are expected to work toward and maintain basic catechist certification. The school presents a united faith to the students through the education of the staff.

Our Lady of the Snows School implemented researched-based IMAGE classrooms at the school since their last accreditation. The Visiting Committee witnessed their first and second grade IMAGE classrooms as well as their third and fourth grade classrooms. It was evident that differentiation was occurring at many levels to meet the various needs of the students. In addition, Our Lady of the Snows School created several math courses in the middle school based on the diverse needs of the students. This allows for further differentiation and lower class sizes within the middle school. Teachers use the Diocese of Reno Standards to inform their instruction. They also participate in PLCs to learn effective instructional methodologies and practices to use in the classroom to support the high achievement of all students. Differentiation occurs in various ways to meet the diverse needs of the students. Our Lady of the Snows School redesigned their homework assignments as well based on research and the desire to put more focus on family. The Visiting Committee recognizes that parents support this change as evidenced during the parent meeting.

Assessment at Our Lady of the Snows School is frequent, varied, and aligns with the curriculum standards. Teachers utilize formative and summative assessments to guide instruction and plan for differentiation in the classroom. Disaggregation of data helps the staff at Our Lady of the Snows School identify specific skill trends to target instruction. The school also utilizes an intervention specialist to support students who need additional assistance. In grades kindergarten through eight, MAP assessments are administered three times a year to monitor progress and inform instruction. Writing benchmarks are given three times a year as well. The ACRE test is administered to grades five and eight annually.

Educational technology has become an area of focus for Our Lady of the Snows School since the last accreditation. The school invested in Chromebooks to allow for 1:1 technology access in the classroom. The technology teacher provides scaffolded instruction for all grades on a variety of technology standards and topics within the classroom. This includes instruction in the areas of robotics, graphic design, electricity, hydraulics, solar energy, flight, photography, sound mixing, and computer programming. In addition, teachers incorporate the use of technology through various classroom activities as well as online learning programs.

The school changed the instructional approach in the classroom to allow for increased higher-level thinking skills to occur. Teachers focus less on teacher-directed whole class instruction and incorporate more problem-solving and project-based learning. The Visiting Committee observed small group instruction taking place in the classrooms as well as students working with partners to learn new skills or clarify concepts. Students take an active role in constructing their knowledge.

With the implementation of IMAGE classrooms, Our Lady of the Snows School has identified the need for new reading resources to match the configuration of these classrooms to include varied reading levels to support further differentiation of instruction. In addition, the school is planning to purchase new math instructional materials for vertical alignment. Curriculum mapping to align the new Nevada Academic Content Standards for Social Studies and the NGSS is an identified goal as well. Through these goals, Our Lady of the Snows School will further address how to support the high achievement of all students.

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

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

The Visiting Committee observed Our Lady of the Snows School to be highly effective in supporting student spiritual, personal, and academic growth. The school provides multiple programs for student academic support, service learning, and resources for all students to learn and grow to their fullest potential; in particular, all students have the opportunity to participate in programs to enhance their personal level of learning. Financial, physical, and human resources are sought by the school and are supported and/or provided by the community, parish, parents, and alumni of the school. The school has a safety plan and safety procedures in accordance with all state and federal law that are updated annually.

The SLEs are incorporated in each lesson throughout the school day, emphasizing the qualities of Knowledge, Service, Faith, and Leadership. Our Lady of the Snows School encourages their students to take the lead in joining programs available to them. Eighth grade students take a leadership role volunteering during the school Mass, and their leadership council participates in daily activities to motivate other students to be inspired in faith-filled living and to serve as a community. Parents are expected to serve the school for a total of twenty hours each year per family to become involved in the spiritual and academic growth of their children. COVID has impacted this expectation.

The students at Our Lady of the Snows School who need academic assistance are assessed by the Student Assistance Team (SAT). These students are assessed through formal and informal testing and observations. A plan is developed for the students with a diagnosis from an outside psychologist or from the school psychologist from the Washoe County School District. The intervention specialist evaluates students referred for assistance and provides strategies or direct services that may be implemented in the classroom.

Our Lady of the Snows School effectively uses technology to improve the curriculum in every classroom. The Visiting Committee observed the use of interactive whiteboards and computers for all students. The teachers are trained in instruction, implementation, and advanced levels of technology adequate for their classes. Students receive technological instruction in the classroom conducted by a professional.

Students who learn at an accelerated pace and who successfully complete their grade level of academics are candidates for a more challenging curriculum. Their needs are also covered through an informal tutoring program that the teachers offer to students in middle school. Teachers are encouraged to implement challenging alternatives to the regular curriculum using IXL, Khan Academy, RAZKids (provided to students from kindergarten through second grade),



and Accelerated Reader. Class grouping is used to encourage advanced learning within a small group of a particular class. Middle school students who have scored at the high achievement level on both classroom and formal tests are given the opportunity to move to more advanced math using a high school curriculum.

The Visiting Committee observed that Our Lady of the Snows School has teachers, administrators, and parent volunteers who work in teams to provide supervision on the playground during recess times and when students are outside before and after school for pick up and drop off. The school has invested in additional security measures, including video surveillance and bullet-proof windows. Some families expressed concern for the lack of security during recess time outside on the playground, but also recognized that the problem is not something due to the school's negligence.

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

**Accreditation Factor #10:** *The pastor, principal, and school board develop, implement, and monitor resources and plans to ensure and support high achievement of all students of the Schoolwide Learning Expectations, Arch/diocesan curriculum standards (local curriculum standards where Arch/diocesan standards don't exist), and other governing authority expectations.*

The Visiting Committee observed Our Lady of the Snows School is effective in its resource management and development to support the high achievement of all students. The school has ample resources and has done an excellent job moving forward, completing capital campaigns, and developing for the future. The Visiting Committee recommends the school formalize these plans for continued future success. The school shares its financial status with the school board and parish finance council, and discusses future projects and school expenditures with the community at large.

Evidence of the school's efficacy in this area is documented through use of the diocesan approved financial checks and balances, audit compliance, budget building and approval process, and an overall adherence to standard financial practices. Additionally, the school has an endowment of 1.2 million dollars with an allowable 5% interest usage annually, a trust of 3.494 million dollars with 150,000 annual disbursements to be split between budget and financial aid, and a halfway completed 12 million dollar capital campaign. The school's financial standing is excellent. Their forward thinking dedication to funding ongoing safety, technology, and textbook replacement show an effective analysis of their financial position to determine responsible stewardship. The school also has an emergency fund of three months of school expenses, demonstrating a commitment to ensure resources are available to sustain the program in an unexpected or unprecedented time.

The school follows the diocesan budgeting process and receives appropriate approvals through the parish finance council and the corporate board. It also follows the diocesan audit requirements. In this area, similar to the structures to support high achievement of all students,

the school needs to formalize their operations to continue its successful financial position and budgetary planning far into the future. Plans for current donations and excess funds as well as capital needs are all based on the principal's creativity and forethought. Though that has served the school well, the dependency of the building and its future growth on one person should be expanded to ensure viability.

The school does not have a formalized technology plan at this time. Throughout COVID, the school quickly evaluated its needs and implemented a lot of technology in a short time. As other needs or discoveries have been made related to technology (infrastructurally or educationally), the administration has responded to those needs and provided funds to make them happen.

The school's identified critical goals in this area are to increase the availability of scholarships, continue to support funding to hire and retain the best teachers, and to create a strategic plan. The finance committee did not identify a need for more financial aid; however, a need for a strategic plan was recognized and is strongly supported by the Visiting Committee.

## Chapter 4: The Action Plan

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

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

### Schoolwide Lists of Significant Accomplishments and Critical Goals

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

1. Implementation of the IMAGE classrooms provides differentiation for all students.
2. Streamlined communication through the Tuesday newsletter, emails, text messages, and phone messages.
3. Strong sense of community fostered by the administrative team is felt by all shareholders.
4. Students are growing in their Catholic faith by identifying the opportunities for service in their community.
5. An intervention specialist and programs are available for students in need of support and enrichment.
6. Establishing leveled math classes in grades fifth through eighth allows the school to better meet the academic needs of all students.
7. Technology devices and computer adaptive software platforms are available including 1:1 Chromebooks for all students.
8. Data analysis demonstrates high academic and religious achievement on MAP and ACRE testing.

### Critical Goals (identified by school)

1. Our Lady of the Snows School will realign math curriculum with the Diocese of Reno Math Standards to better match our current class configurations and course offerings to improve math education and achievement for all students.
2. Our Lady of the Snows School will unpack and implement the new Nevada Academic Content Standards for Social Studies, while incorporating the Peace and Justice standards from our previously adopted standards which reflect our Catholic values, to improve Social Studies education and achievement for all students.
3. Our Lady of the Snows School will unpack and implement the new Nevada State Academic Content Standards for Science based on the Next Generation Science Standards while adapting them to reflect our Catholic values to improve Science education and achievement for all students. (In-Depth)
4. Our Lady of the Snows School will adopt new Reading/Language Arts materials to create a vertically aligned curriculum across grades K-4.
5. Our Lady of the Snows School will improve service oriented activities, in school and in the community, to make them more intentional.

The Visiting Committee observed Our Lady of the Snows School's design and alignment of the Action Plan to be effective. Each of the goals is focused on improving student learning through improving and enhancing curriculum delivery, analysis, and alignment. The development of the five goals can be seen throughout the document and was further explained in conversation with the administration, the leadership team, and the faculty. It was evident from conversations with all three groups that the goals stemmed from the faculty's review of the entire Self Study, their active and on-going review of student performance data, and their desire to make sure their IMAGE classrooms and 7-8 looping curriculum are meeting the needs of every student.

At first glance, each of the three critical goals appear to be very similar in nature. After conversation with faculty and administration, it is clear the goals are different and have different purposes. It is important for all community members and shareholders to understand this.

Strategies for each goal are effectively outlined and include collaboration, research, training, cost, and the person/people responsible for carrying out each strategy. Additionally, the plan proposes MAP data as a way to assess the efficacy of the implementation of the action goals.

### **OPTION A: *Modification of a critical goal:***

The Visiting Committee is recommending that the following critical goal be modified to include a formalized process:

Our Lady of the Snows School will create a documented data driven process for all curriculum adjustments and alignments beginning with the update of the reading/language arts curriculum.

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

N/A

**B. Capacity to Implement and Monitor the Action Plan**

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

The Visiting Committee observed Our Lady of the Snows School to be effective in their capacity to implement and monitor the Action Plan. Our Lady of the Snows School implemented the previous Action Plan and involved the entire community. All recommendations and feedback offered by the previous Visiting Committee were discussed and implemented to ensure high achievement of all students and to drive continuous school-wide improvement. Annual reports of progress and In-Depth reports were completed and shared with the WCEA commissioner. The critical goals identified in the previous cycle became fundamental pieces of life at Our Lady of the Snows School, and every faculty and staff member considered these when planning, instructing, and assessing.

The proposed Action Plan follows a timeline which provides a structure to help the school stay on task, yet is fluid enough to allow the school to identify and meet emerging needs or deal with unexpected situations. The school administration, along with the pastor and the school board will review the progress of the plan on an annual basis to ensure that the objectives and deadlines of the plan are being met. Progress will also be reviewed in monthly school staff meetings and adjustments will be made if needed. The WCEA commissioner from the Diocese of Reno will monitor the Action Plan via the school's annual report.

Information on the school's progress on its Action Plan will be shared with the students, parents, and interested parish and community members through the school newsletter, the school website, Back-to-School and Family Nights, and PTO meetings.

The school's budget will reflect the costs identified in the Action Plan. Title IIA funds from the Washoe County School District will be used, when possible, to assist with funding professional development for teachers. Throughout the implementation of the Action Plan the school will review assessment data and seek faculty input to monitor efficacy of the plan. The administration of Our Lady of the Snows School will also seek feedback from parents, students, and staff to ensure that the true intent of the plan is being realized.

Our Lady of the Snows School is a place of learning that welcomes and embraces all learners and strives to help each reach their potential. It is a school community that is grounded in service and compassion, and embraces the ideals of the Catholic faith. It is a professional work environment that seeks to nurture the talent and spirit of its staff. Most importantly, it is a place that honors the whole child and seeks to treat children with dignity, compassion and high expectations so that they will grow to become loving Catholics and confident, curious learners.

The school has access, and the ability to access, all resources necessary for the implementation of the Action Plan.

## Visiting Committee Summary Thoughts:

The Visiting Committee observed a tremendous sense of dedication and community among the faculty, staff, students, parents, and pastor at Our Lady of the Snows School. The school is deeply rooted in Catholic faith and traditions and keeps this focus at the heart of all they do. The richness of the school's Catholic Identity combined with the high level of student achievement were inspiring to see.

The school has an innovative academic program, healthy operational vitality, and a strong community. It is noteworthy, however, that these strengths have not impacted the school's mindset of continuous improvement which was evident in the Self Study and defined critical goals. The school has shown progress toward both previous Self Study goals, and separate internal goals in a short time period, indicating a pattern of continuous growth and improvement.

The Visiting Committee was inspired by the mission and Schoolwide Learning Expectations. We commend the whole community for being committed to *Faith, Knowledge, Leadership, and Service*.