

## **AREA 2: School Mission and Beliefs Statements**

**Chairpersons:** Kathy Kata, Third Grade  
Margarita Sastre, Fourth Grade

**Members:** Linda Nieto, Second Grade  
Kathy Boice, Principal  
Eileen Paul, Counselor  
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## **Introduction**

St. Paul's Catholic School began the process of redefining the mission and beliefs by engaging in a consensus building process that involved the Pastor, teachers, students, administrators, members of the School Advisory Board, parents, parish council, and the school community at large.

The Area 2 Mission and Beliefs committee was comprised of three teachers of various grade levels, the guidance counselor and two administrators. The committee began the cooperative process of developing the mission and beliefs statement by reviewing the following: the FCC Principles and Standards, Area A: Beliefs and Mission, current research in faith formation, and reorienting the faculty to the principles and standards for Mission and Beliefs. The committee also reviewed the data collected in Area 1 including survey results from the NSSE Opinion Surveys. The NSSE/FCC School Beliefs Inventory was administered to stakeholders in October providing stakeholders with the opportunity to express opinions with regard to faith formation at St. Paul's Catholic School. The school community was educated to the purpose of Area 2 through a series of School Improvement Plan faculty meetings, parent emails and the School Improvement Plan Parent Night on November 18, 2010. Members of the school community were asked to reflect upon the impact of the full implementation of each belief statement and the school mission in light of the changes experienced in the school community since they were originally written.

The committee also took into consideration the school's profile data collected in Area 1, as well as results from the NSSE's Opinion Surveys. Some of the items taken into consideration from the Area 1, NSSE opinion surveys were responses that although not significantly low, indicated a need for improvement in some areas. All three survey groups (student, teacher, and parent) indicated a problem with bullying at the school. The scores for this survey item were student survey question #31 - 2.75, teacher survey question #39 -2.96 and parent item #38-3.09 respectively. Parent responses also indicated a need for improvement in serving students with a full range of student abilities, survey question # 19, 3.52. Teacher's responses indicated that students did not fully respect school and community property, survey question #33, 3.78. This information was considered during the revision of the mission and belief statements.

*"...Catholic schools afford the fullest and best opportunity to realize the fourfold purpose of Christian education, namely to provide an atmosphere in which the Gospel message is proclaimed, community in Christ is experienced, service to our sisters and brothers is the norm, and thanksgiving and worship of our God is cultivated (Renewing our Commitment)."*

### **The Process of Defining the School's Mission and Beliefs Statements of St. Paul's Catholic School:**

The task of the committee was to facilitate a review and analysis of the former mission statement and list of beliefs in light of any changes within the school community since the last accreditation in 2005. Taking into account current educational research, the committee and stakeholders sought to clarify the focus and accuracy of the school's mission and establish priorities as a learning organization. At the school improvement plan meeting on September 1, 2010, the faculty reviewed and discussed the former mission and belief statements and were reoriented to the unique purpose of the Catholic school. The committee utilized data from Area 1 including current demographics and results from the NSSE Opinion surveys to present an analysis of community needs and concerns regarding the spiritual and educational direction of the school. Utilizing the school website, stakeholders were asked to review a summary of this information including opinion survey results through a series of accreditation updates and the posting of Area 1 in its entirety. Monthly accreditation area updates were also published in the principal's newsletter, *The Voice of Boice*.

The process of redefining the school's mission and belief statements also involved the review of current research and Catholic documents to educate the committee and assist with the revision of the mission statement. These sources included the following:

- *Architects of Catholic Culture: Designing and Building Catholic Culture in Catholic Schools*
- *Faith, Finances and the Future, A Notre Dame Study of U.S. Pastors*
- *Making God Known, Loved, and Served, The Future of Catholic Primary and Secondary School in the United States*
- *Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools in the Third Millennium*
- *To Teach as Jesus Did: A Pastoral Message on Catholic Education*
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

The next step in this process allowed the members of the faculty, staff, school board, parents, students, school community, and Pastor to evaluate the mission statement and list of beliefs using the following criteria:

*The mission statement should reflect the primary purpose of the school. It should represent the vision of the school and should be a succinct expression of the school's ideals. The list of beliefs should concern Catholic education and student learning which represent the core values of the school. The mission and beliefs statements should provide direction and focus to the teaching, learning, and operational activities of the school.*

*The mission statement should answer the following questions:*

*Who do we serve? Why are we here?*

*What do we do?  
What is our purpose?*

*The list of beliefs should answer the following questions:*

*What do we believe about Catholic education?  
What do we believe about our children?  
Who should attend our school?  
What are the values we hold most dearly?  
Are the belief statements clear and precise?  
Are they free of words that may not be understood by the general public?  
How would the school be different if these beliefs were fully implemented?*

The criteria for evaluation were sent to the school community (parents, faculty, and school board) via email. Members were requested to provide feedback. Students in grades four through eight reviewed the mission during a student focus group meeting on September 15, 2010 and provided input for revision. The assistant principal met with the Pastor and parish council representatives to present the current mission and beliefs at the parish council meeting and to orient them to the process and purpose of revising the school mission. Council members of the various ministries were invited to provide input for the revision process.

### **NSSE/FCC School Beliefs Inventory Results:**

The final section of Area 2 involved the gathering of information needed to discern the community's perceptions and beliefs. This was accomplished by inventorying representatives of our school population using the National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE/FCC) School Beliefs Inventory. The inventory results were studied to determine current stakeholder perceptions as they relate to the spiritual formation and Catholic identity of the school and to provide guidance for revising the current mission and belief statements.

One hundred ninety-seven (197) inventories from the School Beliefs Inventory as provided by the Florida Catholic Conference were distributed. These inventories were utilized to gather data on the school community's perceptions regarding the integration of the Catholic faith at St. Paul's Catholic School. Students and faculty completed inventories at school, while parent inventories were distributed via email. One hundred eighty-five (185) inventories were returned (95% return rate).

The School Beliefs Inventory provided stakeholders with the opportunity to express opinions with regard to faith formation at St. Paul's Catholic School. Inventory items included Catholic values, morality, parent involvement in the learning process, learning environment, respect, diversity, and community involvement. Parents and faculty results were grouped together. Student inventory results are shown separately.

The inventory asked stakeholders to rate statements using the following rating scale:

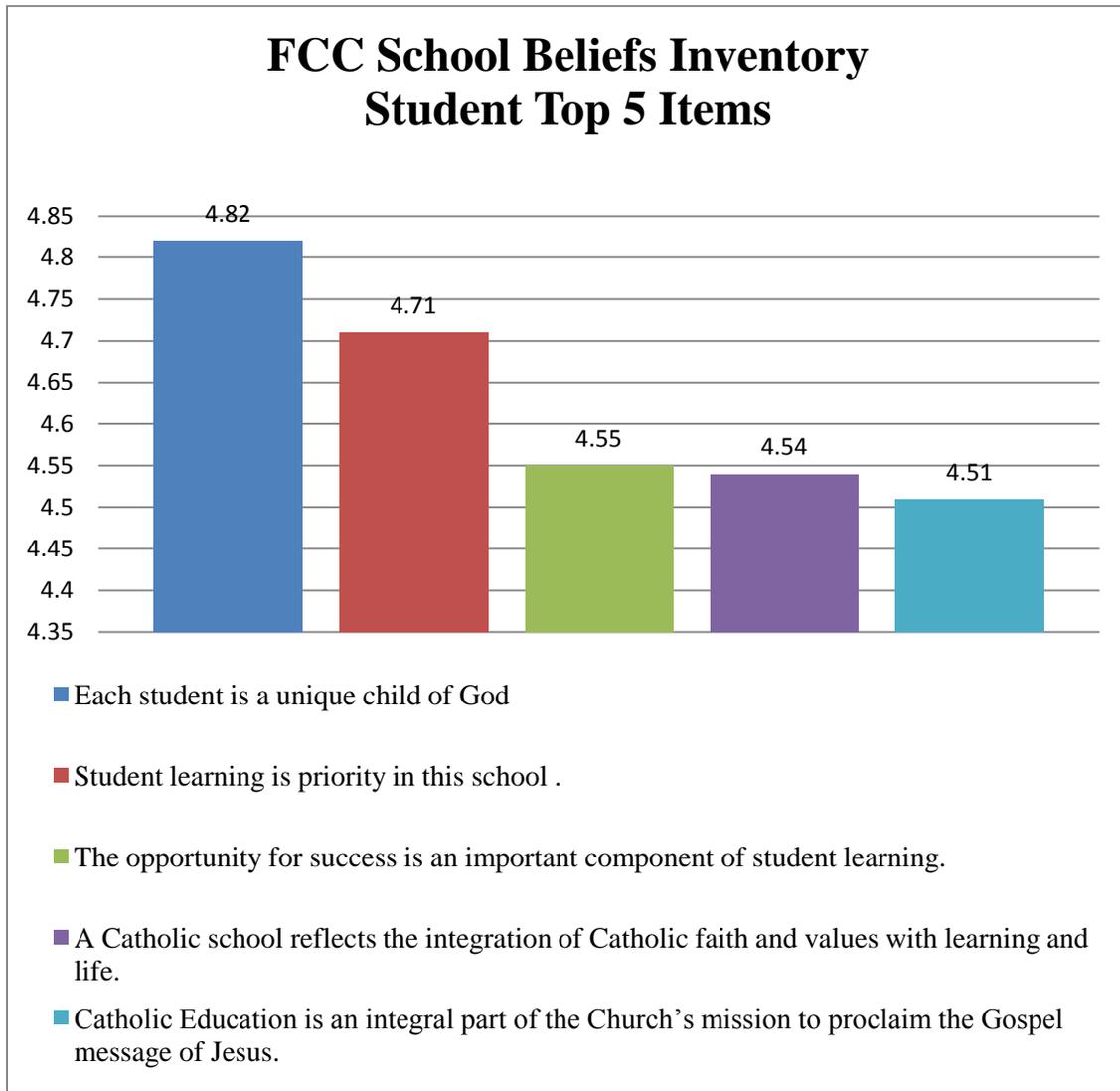
<b>NSSE/FCC SCHOOL BELIEFS INVENTORY LIKERT SCALE</b>	
<b>Value</b>	<b>Questions 1-25</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Agree</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Neutral</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>

Common beliefs among all stakeholders which received the highest scores included the belief that each child is unique child of God that the Catholic school integrates faith and values with learning, and that Catholic education is integral to the greater mission of the church. Common inventory items receiving the lowest scores by all stakeholders included the importance of stakeholder participation in the success of the school and the lack of meaningful application of learning. It should also be noted that students did not feel that parents were their primary educators. Please note that a review of the entire NSSE/FCC School Beliefs Inventory (See Area 2, Appendix pgs.113-114) will provide a clearer representation of overall stakeholder beliefs regarding faith formation and Catholic identity.

Although no scores were significantly low, a need for improvement is indicated in several areas. The results of the inventories provided valuable insight in the revision of the mission and beliefs statements and will be integrated into the action plan for Area 5. The top five strengths and weaknesses for the stakeholder groups are as follows:

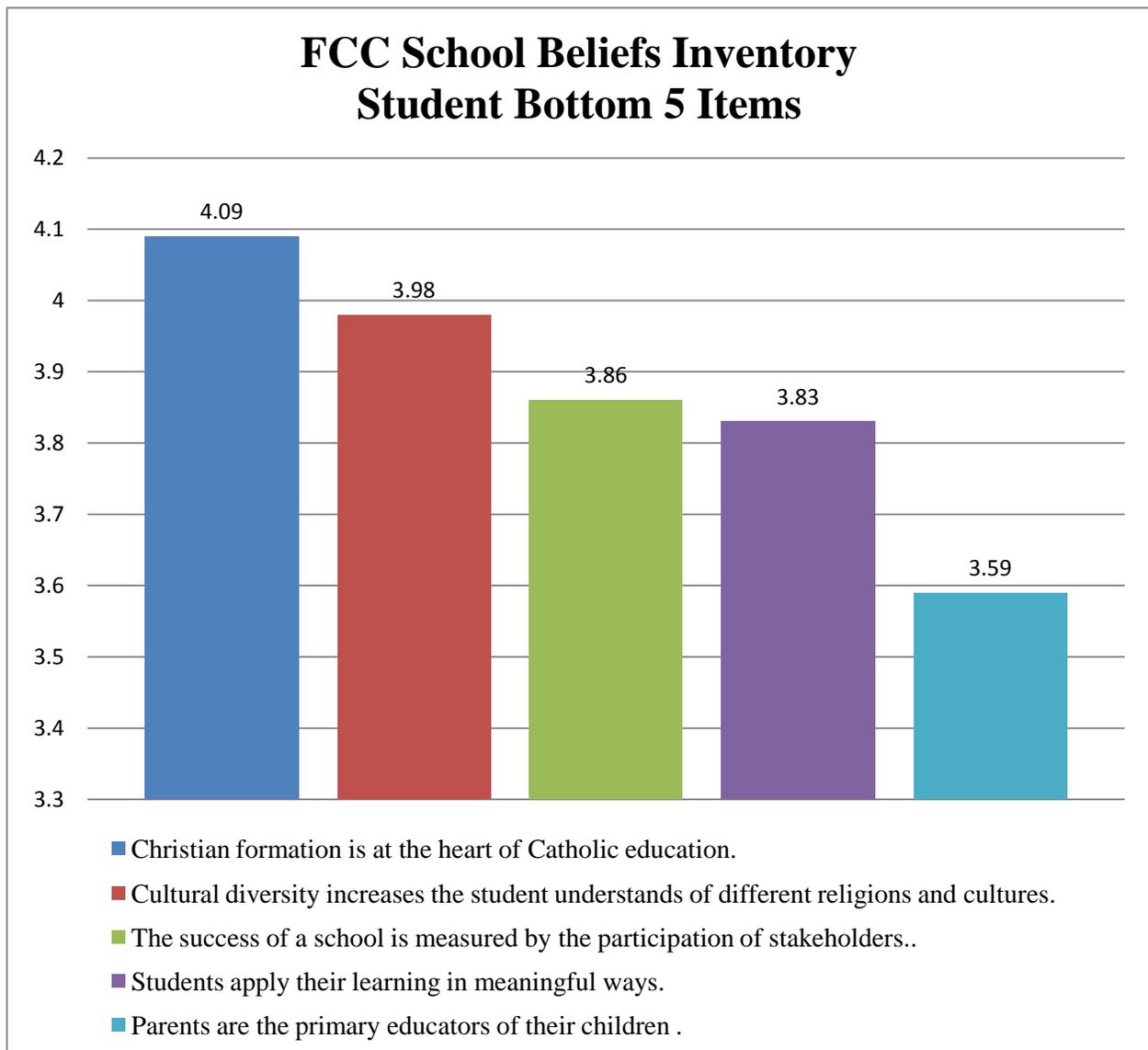
The **Student Inventory** results indicated the following **top five strengths** for school beliefs at St Paul's:

- Each student is a unique child of God (Inventory question #6, 4.82).
- Student learning is priority in this school (Inventory question #7, 4.71).
- The opportunity for success is an important component of student learning (Inventory question #16, 4.55).
- A Catholic school reflects the integration of Catholic faith and values with learning and life (Inventory question #2, 4.54).
- Catholic Education is an integral part of the Church's mission to proclaim the Gospel message of Jesus (Inventory question #1, 4.51).



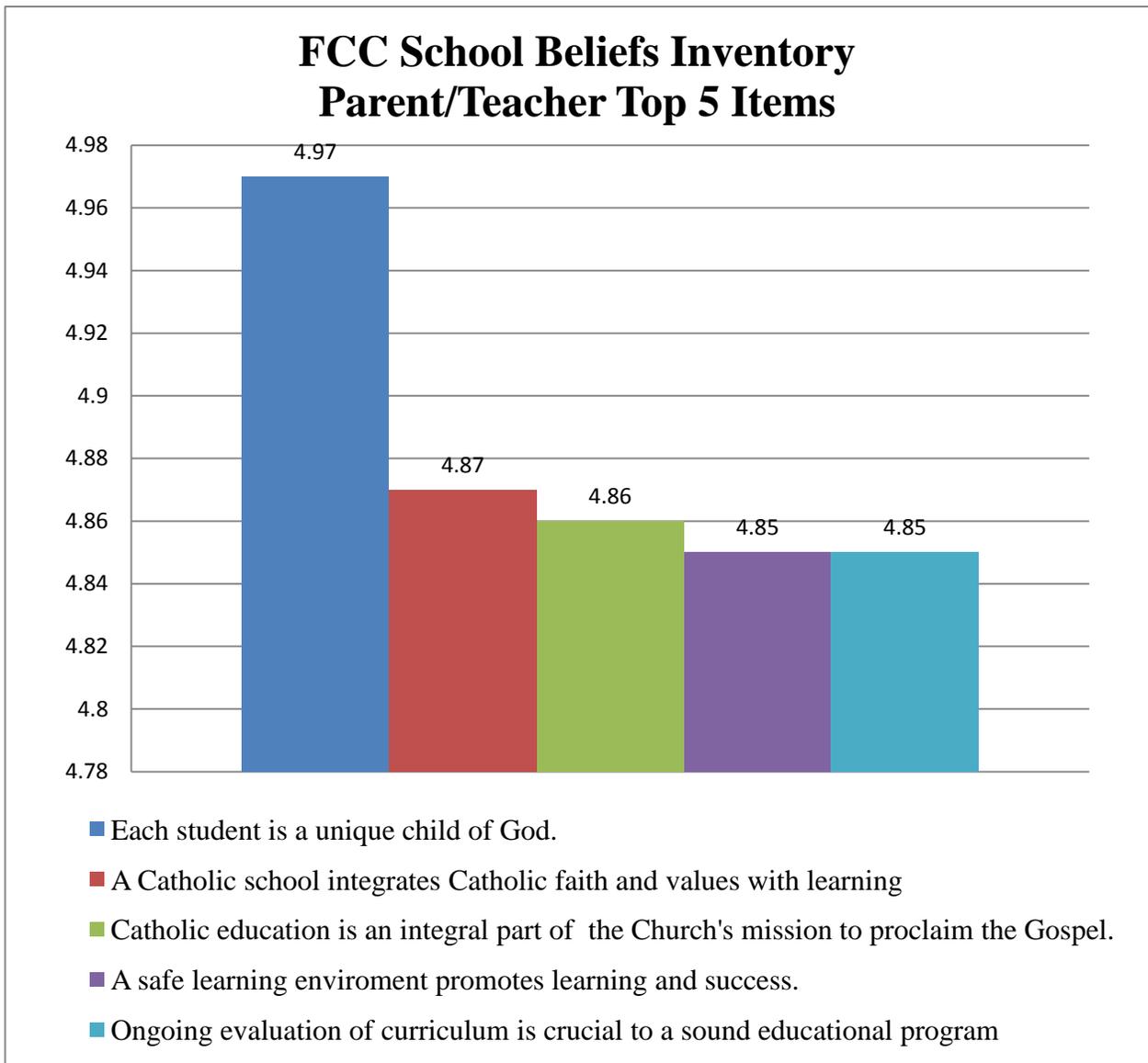
This group further stated that the following items on the Inventory were **areas of weakness**:

- Christian formation is at the heart of Catholic education (Inventory question #3, 4.09).
- Cultural diversity increases the student understanding of different religions and cultures (Inventory question #17, 3.98).
- The success of a school is measured by the participation of stakeholders (Inventory question #23, 3.86).
- Students apply their learning in meaningful ways (Inventory question #10, 3.83).
- Parents are the primary educators of their children (Inventory question, #4, 3.59).



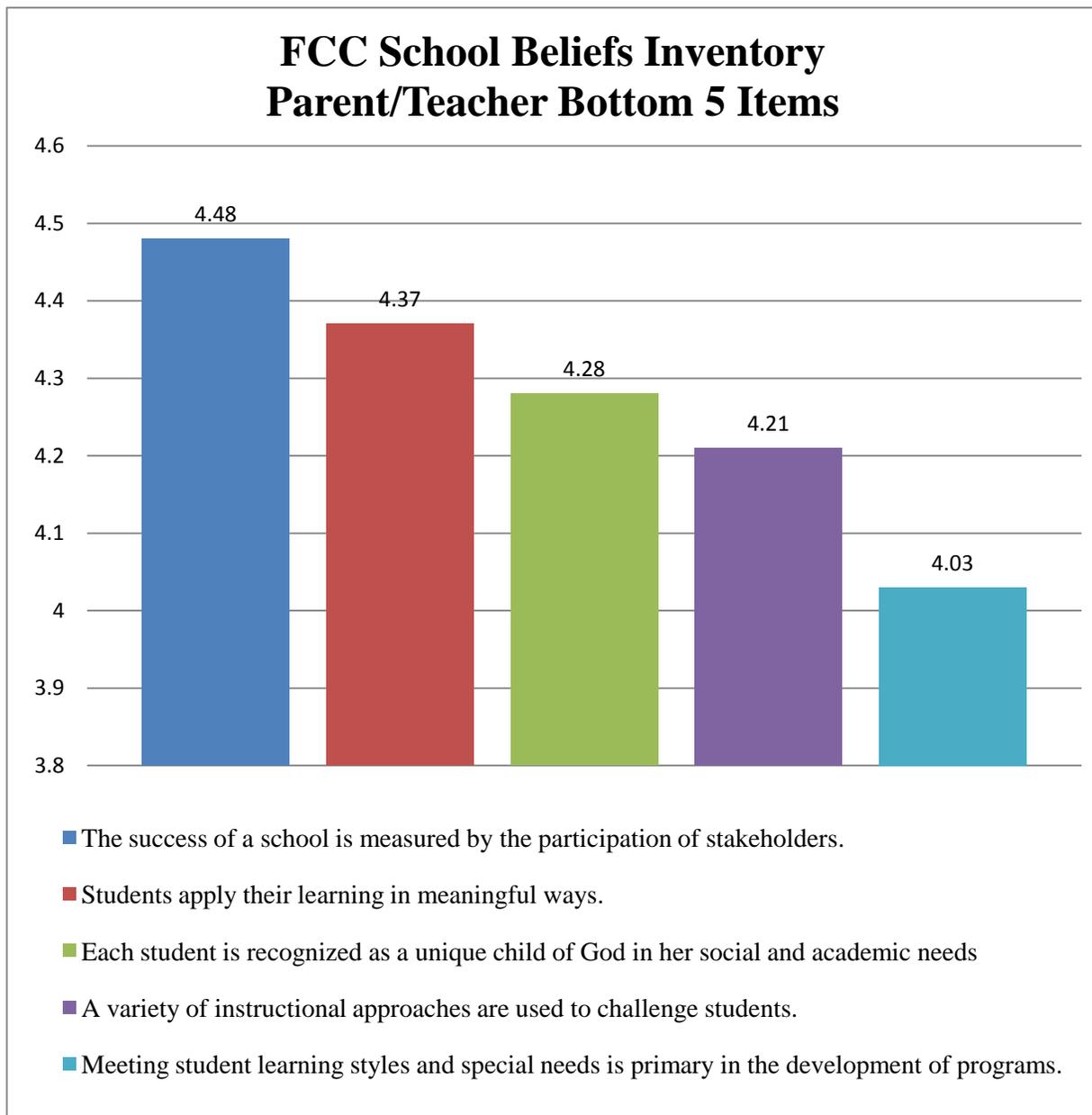
The **Parent/Teacher inventory** results indicated the following **top five strengths** for school beliefs at St Paul's:

- Each student is a unique child of God (Inventory question #6, 4.97).
- A Catholic school reflects the integration of Catholic faith and values with learning and life (Inventory question #2, 4.87).
- Catholic Education is an integral part of the Church's mission to proclaim the Gospel message of Jesus (Inventory question #1, 4.86).
- A safe and comfortable learning environment promotes learning and success (Inventory question #19, 4.85).
- Ongoing evaluation and improvement of curriculum is crucial to the development of a sound educational program (Inventory question #20, 4.85).



This group further stated that the following items on the Inventory were **areas of weakness**:

- The success of a school is measured by the participation of stakeholders (Inventory question #23, 2.84).
- Students apply their learning in meaningful ways (Inventory question #10, 4.37).
- Each student is recognized and valued as a unique child of God in his/her social, emotional and academic needs (Inventory question, #12, 4.28).
- A variety of instructional approaches are used to challenge students to demonstrate their full potential (Inventory question, #14, 4.21).
- Meeting student learning styles and special needs is primary in the development of programs, curriculum and instruction (Inventory question #13, 4.03).



## **Mission Statement and Belief Statements**

Area 2 committee members met on October 1, 2010 to discuss revisions to the mission and belief statements in light of the findings derived from the NSSE/FCC School Beliefs Inventory completed by stakeholders and from input and feedback gathered from the school community. On October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010, the proposed revisions to the mission statement and beliefs were forwarded via email to the faculty for review and comment. The assistant principal met with the Pastor to review the findings of the committee and to discuss the proposed revisions ensuring that all proposed changes were aligned with the greater mission of the St. Paul's parish. On October 13, 2010, stakeholders were sent a letter (See Area 2, Appendix pgs. 111-112) requesting them to evaluate the proposed mission statement and list of beliefs while keeping in mind the primary purpose, ideals, and core values of the school. The Student Government Association (SGA) provided input for revision at the October officer meeting. The proposed changes were also submitted to the school advisory board for review and approval.

On November 18, 2010, over 100 parents, teachers, and school board members as well as the administration and Pastor attended the School Improvement Plan Parent Night. This informative presentation of current educational research included future trends in education within the desired results for student learning, changing global expectations, and the challenges St. Paul's students will face in the future. Both the NSSE Opinion Survey and the FCC Beliefs Inventory results were shared and discussed. The process of developing mission and beliefs statements were reviewed in light of FCC Principles and Standards. Stakeholders attending the presentation were invited and encouraged to provide input to the mission revision process. As a result of this input, a second draft was generated and presented to parents, teachers, and board members via email.

After further review and revision, stakeholders felt the beliefs statements should be reordered placing them as child-centered, teacher-centered, and community-centered respectively. A final draft of the mission and beliefs statements was presented to all stakeholders for ratification on January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010.

St. Paul's Mission and Beliefs statements are visible throughout the school. They are located on the school web site, in the family handbook, and in the student planner. All faculty members and students are encouraged to embrace the mission and beliefs making them a living inspiration for every aspect of student life.

***“To teach in order to lead others to faith is the task of each and every believer.”***

*(St. Thomas Aquinas, CCC 904)*

### **Former Mission Statement**

*St. Paul’s is a place where faith and knowledge intertwine*

### **Proposed Mission Statement**

*The mission of the St. Paul’s Catholic School community is to provide an environment where the Gospel message and teachings of the Catholic Church are woven throughout quality education...St. Paul’s is a place where faith and knowledge intertwine.*

*In the Catholic school, prime responsibility for creating this unique Christian school climate rests with the teachers, as individuals and as a community. Teaching has an extraordinary moral depth and is one of man's most excellent and creative activities, for the teacher does not write on inanimate material, but on the very spirits of human beings.*

**(The Catholic School: On the Threshold of the New Millennium, 1998  
Sacred Congregation of Catholic Education)**

## **Former Beliefs**

- ❖ Everyone is treated with dignity and respect, which nurtures spiritual growth.
- ❖ The heart, mind, and soul is prepared to meet life's many and varied challenges.
- ❖ The importance of service to school, parish, community and the world at large is developed.
- ❖ Each child is recognized as an individual and capable of learning.
- ❖ Teachers promote personal best effort to achieve academic excellence.
- ❖ Teachers work to provide a variety of instructional approaches.
- ❖ A strong sense of responsibility for their own learning is instilled in our students.

## **Beliefs**

**We believe...**

- ❖ each child should be recognized as an individual and capable of learning.
- ❖ children should be instilled with a strong sense of responsibility for their learning.
- ❖ teachers should provide a variety of technological and educational approaches to prepare each child for an ever-changing world.
- ❖ teachers should promote personal best effort to achieve academic excellence.
- ❖ open communication and mutual respect prepares the heart, mind and soul to meet life's many and varied challenges.
- ❖ service to school, parish, community, country and the world is essential.

## **Appendix**

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TO: St. Paul's Catholic School Stakeholders

FROM: Mission and Beliefs Committee  
(Mrs. Boice, Mrs. Kata, Mrs. Nieto, Ms. Paul, and Ms. Sastre)

RE: Mission and Beliefs Statements

The task of our committee was to review and analyze our mission statement and list of beliefs in light of any changes within the school community since the last accreditation in 2005. Taking into account current educational research, we tried to clarify our focus and establish our priorities as a learning organization.

The next step in this process would be for the members of the faculty, staff, school board, parents, students, and community to evaluate the mission statement and list of beliefs using the following criteria.

Our mission statement should reflect the primary purpose of the school. It should represent the vision of the school and should be a succinct expression of the school's ideals. The list of beliefs should concern Catholic education and student learning which represent the core values of the school. The mission and beliefs statements should provide direction and focus to the teaching, learning, and operational activities of the school.

The mission statement should answer the following questions:

- Whom to we serve?
- Why are we here?
- What do we do?
- What is our purpose?

The list of beliefs should answer the following questions:

- What do we believe about Catholic education?
- What do we believe about our children?
- Who should attend our school?
- What are the values we hold most dearly?
- Are the beliefs statements clear and precise?
- Are they free of words that may not be understood by the general public?
- Is everyone willing to make a commitment to the direction indicated by these beliefs?
- How would the school be different if these beliefs were fully implemented?

Please feel free to direct comments or questions to any member of the committee. We thank you in advance for your help completing this part of the accreditation process.

### **Proposed Revision to St. Paul's Mission Statement**

The mission of the St. Paul's Catholic School community is to provide an environment where the Gospel message and teachings of the Catholic Church are woven throughout a quality education...St. Paul's is a place where faith and knowledge intertwine.

**We believe...**

- ❖ open communication and mutual respect prepares the heart, mind and soul to meet life's many and varied challenges.
- ❖ service to school, parish, community and the world is essential.
- ❖ each child should be recognized as an individual and capable of learning.
- ❖ children should be instilled with a strong sense of responsibility for their learning.
- ❖ teachers should provide a variety of technological and educational approaches to prepare each child for an ever-changing world.
- ❖ teachers should promote personal best effort to achieve academic excellence.

<b>FCC School Beliefs Inventory</b>	<b>Student Response</b>	<b>Parent/Teacher Response</b>
1. Catholic education is an integral part of the Church's mission to proclaim the gospel message of Jesus, to build faith communities, to celebrate through worship and to serve others without distinction.	4.51	4.86
2. A Catholic school reflects the integration of a Catholic faith and values with learning and life.	4.54	4.87
3. Christian formation is at the heart of Catholic education.	4.09	4.77
4. Parents are the primary educators of their children.	3.59	4.65
5. Students experience faith-based traditions as part of their educational formation in Catholic schools.	4.18	4.87
6. Each student is a unique child of God.	4.82	4.97
7. Student learning is a priority in this school.	4.71	4.76
8. Students learn in a variety of ways.	4.29	4.75
9. Students are actively involved in the learning process.	4.12	4.49
10. Students apply their learning in meaningful ways.	3.83	4.37
11. Students are challenged to demonstrate an understanding of essential knowledge and skills with evidence of active problem-solving and quality work ethic.	4.15	4.60
12. Each student is recognized and valued as a unique child of God in his/her social, emotional, and academic needs.	4.14	4.28
13. Meeting student learning styles and special needs is primary in the development of programs, curriculum, and instruction.	4.16	4.03
14. A variety of instructional approaches challenge students to demonstrate their full potential and individuality.	4.11	4.21
15. A healthy learning environment is everyone's responsibility.	4.40	4.82
16. The opportunity for success is an important component of student learning.	4.55	4.81
17. Cultural diversity increases the student's understanding of different religions, peoples, and cultures.	3.98	4.50
18. A supportive and challenging learning environment increases a student's potential for responsible decision making.	4.34	4.75
19. A safe and comfortable learning environment promotes learning and success.	4.45	4.85
20. Ongoing evaluation and improvement of the curriculum is crucial to the development of a sound educational program.	4.20	4.85
21. The curriculum furnishes instruction in Catholic truths and moral values that are an integral part of the school program.	4.11	4.46
22. The school program reflects Christian values of social justice and peace.	4.29	4.61

*School Improvement Plan 2011: Area 2 Mission and Beliefs Statements*

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23. The success of a school is measured by the participation and ownership of the stakeholders.	3.86	4.48
24. Pastors, principals, teachers, parent advisory organizations, and members of the parish share responsibility for the mission of the school.	4.38	4.76
25. Mutual respect among and between the students and staff	4.43	4.78