

# Evaluation of religious formation programs

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## **Evaluation of Religious Formation Programs**

by

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Institute for Catholic Educational Leadership  
University of San Francisco

Published by

**The National Catholic Educational Association**  
Secondary School Department  
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Prenote: This document is written in a style similar to the format of the Evaluative Criteria and references below suggest how it might be integrated into a school evaluation which employs the Evaluative Criteria as the basis for its self-evaluation.

Name of School \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Self-evaluation by:

Name	Position	Name	Position

### Guiding Principles

These principles are offered for your acceptance, rejection or modification. Please feel free to make changes.

Religiously oriented schools are not only part of their geographical and civic communities but also define themselves in terms of their relationship to the religion with which they are affiliated, e.g., the Catholic Church, the Lutheran Church, the Jewish community, etc. These schools derive from these larger communities important aspects of their history, identity and purpose, and, with these elements, clearly defined objectives which respond to the special needs and desires of the clientele who patronize the schools. Evaluation of these objectives is essential to a school's estimate of its success or failure; consequently, these objectives call for the same level of organization, resources and evaluation that is applied to other programs in the school.

The explicitly religious purpose of a religiously oriented school is twofold: first, the expansion of the student's understanding of religious content, especially the substance of the religious tradition of which he or she is a member; second, the creation of an environment and opportunities where religious and moral issues can be explored experientially and the student's personal relationship to the beliefs, values and practices of religion clarified and deepened. The section of the Evaluative Criteria (Fifth Edition) which focuses on Religion (Section 4-14) is primarily concerned with the first and more academic and cognitive of these purposes. This section on the Religious Formation Program is more directly concerned

with the second and more personal and affective goal.\* Though there is obviously overlap, the objectives are distinct enough to require separate treatment and to be viewed as separate though complementary programs in a religiously oriented school. Ultimately both the Religion Department and the Religious Formation Program are not ends in themselves but aim at preparing the student for the possibility of a transforming religious experience under divine initiative.

The Religious Formation Program should include specific programs with clearly defined objectives. The programs should be based on an analysis of the religious backgrounds and needs of the school's students and their families. Competent and specially trained personnel should administer and implement these programs. While religious formation programs should be careful not to violate the conscience of individual students, they may be based on the assumption that families and students choosing to attend a school with clearly defined religious objectives and programs have a desire to participate in these programs as they are described in brochures, catalogues and other public information concerning the school.

As an agency of religious formation, the school does not propose to ignore or supplant but rather to supplement and cooperate with the religious formation efforts of the family and established religious organizations.

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\*It should be noted that use of this Religious Formation Program form with the Religion Section (4-14) of the Evaluative Criteria (Fifth Edition) requires several modifications of the Religion (4-14) form. Suggestions will be published by the NCEA later in 1979.

Note: Before proceeding with work on this self-evaluation, prepare and attach as part of the self-evaluation a list of the major goals of the Religious Formation Program.

## INSTRUCTIONS

### General

The ideal use of this evaluation instrument would consist of two stages: first, a self-evaluation by members of the school staff; second, an evaluation by a visiting committee. The aim of the latter group would be to validate the school's own self-evaluation.

The content of this evaluation instrument (guiding principles, checklists, and evaluation items) may require adaptation by the local school staff in order to adjust the instrument and its components to the distinctive goals and particular clientele of the school. If a change in wording of an item in the checklists or evaluations would render the item more applicable to the school, such a change should be made. Similarly, if the evaluation format neglects areas which the school judges important, they should be added for the sake of completeness. However, it is assumed that the instrument identifies the key areas worthy of evaluation. If significant changes are made in the checklists or evaluations of the instrument, it is important that the reasons for such changes be specified.

Both the self-evaluation and the visiting committee evaluation should be based on an important premise: the religious formation program should be suited to the population being served and should be consistent with the declared goals of the school. Thus, it is important that the school and visiting committee evaluation of the religious formation program be made in the light of the declared philosophy and objectives of the school and against the background of the needs and aspirations of the school's clientele. The school and outside evaluators should continually be asking themselves: how well do the practices and performances of this school meet the needs of those who patronize the school and fulfill the stated objectives of the institution? Evaluators should also keep in mind that the aim of the evaluation is twofold: assessment of the efficacy of current programs and stimulation to improved performance.

### Individual Sections: Checklist and Evaluation Items

Both checklist and evaluation items should use the following scale in the evaluation: 5 - excellent; 4 - good; 3 - fair; 2 - poor; 1 - missing but necessary; N.A. - not applicable to this school.

In applying these standards, evaluators are asked to judge how well the school is functioning in each specific area. If the school is making no provision or has a poorly functioning program in a particular area, this should be the subject of further description and/or the focus of a committee recommendation.

Evaluators should draw on their professional experience in making judgments. They should keep in mind that a rating of 5 does not mean ideal or perfect. The following example may be of assistance. If the item "A variety of religious services are held" is being evaluated, the following judgments might be appropriate.

5 - the variety is among the best that you have observed in any school

4 - there is good variety but it is not among the best you have seen

3 - there is fair variety

2 - there is poor variety

1 - there is virtually no variety

N.A. - variety in religious services is unnecessary.

The category N.A. (not applicable) should be used sparingly and its use should always be accompanied by a statement indicating why the item is regarded as not applicable.

#### Comments

After each subsection there is room under the heading "Comments" for additional information explanatory of checklist or evaluation items. Evaluators are encouraged to make use of this space in order to make the evaluation more complete and understandable.

#### Outline of EVALUATION OF RELIGIOUS FORMATION PROGRAMS

- I Organization
- II Nature of Offerings
- III Physical Facilities
- IV Direction of Learning
- V Outcomes
- VI Special Characteristics
- VII General Evaluation

I ORGANIZATION

Checklist

1. The religious nature of the school and its programs are clearly and accurately described in public relations materials, application forms, etc. . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Acceptance notices, registration forms, etc. make clear the school's religious expectations of students and their families. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Students who are not members of the religious group which sponsors the school are informed of the school's requirements or expectations for their level of involvement in religious formation activities . . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
4. The religious needs of the students and their families have been surveyed and are known to the staff. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Programs in this school are consistent with the needs and objectives for religious formation of adolescents as defined by the religious tradition sponsoring the school. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Programs have been organized with specific reference to the analysis of student needs. . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
7. The religious formation program is comprehensive and has segments which involve students in every area of activity judged important to the religious tradition . . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Provision is made in programs to meet individual student religious needs. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Special provision is made for students who demonstrate particular interest in religious growth or service. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Responsibility for overall direction of the program has been established. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Service or religious action programs are well coordinated both within the school, and, where appropriate, with outside agencies . . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Responsibilities for segments of the Religious Formation Program have been delegated to appropriate personnel. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5

13. Administrators, counselors and teachers in all departments understand their relationship to and role in the Religious Formation Program. . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Expectations of faculty members who are not members of the religious tradition operating the school have been adequately defined. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
15. There is coordination between the Religion Department and the Religious Formation Program where this is appropriate. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
16. The goals and content of the ongoing Religious Formation Program are communicated to parents at appropriate intervals. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
17. The role of parents in the religious formation of their children is acknowledged and an effort made to coordinate the efforts of the home and the school. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
18. To what extent is the Religious Formation Program in the school aware of and cooperating with parish religious formation activities for adolescents? . . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5

Evaluations

(a) <i>To what extent have school's religious expectations of students and parents been clearly defined and communicated? . . . . .</i>	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
(b) <i>To what extent have the religious needs of the students been analyzed and the program adapted to those needs? . . . . .</i>	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
(c) <i>To what extent have the responsibilities in the Religious Formation Program been defined and assigned? . . . . .</i>	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
(d) <i>To what extent have the roles and responsibilities of all faculty members in religious formation be defined? . . . . .</i>	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
(e) <i>To what extent is there acknowledgement and coordination of religious formation efforts between home and school? . . . . .</i>	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5

Comments

II NATURE OF ACTIVITIES

Checklist

1. There is a well developed program of religious services. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Religious services have been planned in accord with the needs and level of religious development of the students involved. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
3. A <u>variety</u> of religious services are held. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Provision is made for individual students to receive religious counseling. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Opportunities for personal religious reflection (e.g., religious retreats) are provided for students in every grade. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Programs are available which encourage students to put their religious beliefs into action (e.g., service to the community). . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Programs aimed at promoting a sense of social justice are explicitly related to religious formation both organizationally and in the perception of students. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Opportunities are provided for students to learn and grow in methods of personal prayer. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
9. The general environment of the school encourages open discussion of religion and its importance for life in general and moral and social questions in particular. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Programs are provided for students who show special interest in particular phases of the Religious Formation Program. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Programs aimed at the religious development of parents and at assisting parents in the religious formation of their children are provided. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Programs are provided to assist faculty members in their personal religious development. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Programs are provided to assist faculty members in their participation in religious formation activities for students. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Opportunities are provided for Board of Trustee members to deepen their personal religious commitment and their awareness of the religious mission of the school. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5

15. Programs exist which promote the continuing religious formation of alumni. . . . . N.A. 1 2 3 4 5

Evaluations

(a) To what extent does the program of religious services meet the needs of students? . . . . . N.A. 1 2 3 4 5

(b) To what extent do religious services show appropriate variety and imagination? . . . . . N.A. 1 2 3 4 5

(c) To what extent do the activities in the program provide for individual problems, special interests, etc.? . . . N.A. 1 2 3 4 5

(d) To what extent does the overall environment of the school promote the religious formation of students and the general religious goals of the school? . . . . N.A. 1 2 3 4 5

(e) To what extent does the program provide for activities which allow students to practice their religious beliefs? . . . . . N.A. 1 2 3 4 5

(f) To what extent are staff members being helped to contribute to the religious goals of the school? . . . N.A. 1 2 3 4 5

(g) To what extent does the program cooperate with and assist parents in the religious formation of their children? . . . . . N.A. 1 2 3 4 5

(h) To what extent does the school provide programs for the religious development of trustees and alumni? . . . . . N.A. 1 2 3 4 5

(i) To what extent does the program cooperate with parish activities for adolescents? . . . . . N.A. 1 2 3 4 5

Comments

### III PHYSICAL FACILITIES

#### Checklist

1. The space used for religious services is suitable for worship services for high school students. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Appropriate office space is provided for staff members engaged in religious formation activities and is in locations convenient and easily accessible to students. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Appropriate rooms are available for students involved in informal religious formation activities. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Retreat or religious reflection programs are held in on-campus and off-campus locations which are conducive to personal reflection and prayer. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
5. The school schedule makes sufficient and suitable time provision for religious formation activities. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5

#### Evaluations

(a) <i>To what extent does allocation of space reflect the importance of the religious goals of the school? . . . . .</i>	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
(b) <i>How adequate are the spaces provided for religious program offices and activities? . . . . .</i>	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
(c) <i>How adequate are the time provisions for religious formation activities? . . . . .</i>	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5

#### Comments

IV DIRECTION OF FORMATION ACTIVITIES

A. Staff

Checklist

Faculty members with significant responsibilities in the Religious Formation Program:

- 1. Have adequate preparation in the areas of their responsibility. . . . . N.A. 1 2 3 4 5
- 2. Evidence a current knowledge of different models of religious formation programs. . . . . N.A. 1 2 3 4 5
- 3. Exhibit an up-to-date awareness of official religious teaching and ideas. . . . . N.A. 1 2 3 4 5
- 4. Demonstrate the ability to plan and implement activities which meet student needs and interests. . . . . N.A. 1 2 3 4 5
- 5. Have access to ministerial personnel to conduct religious services. . . . . N.A. 1 2 3 4 5
- 6. Demonstrate a knowledge of the psychological principles of adolescent religious growth. . . . . N.A. 1 2 3 4 5
- 7. Continue in-service education through attendance at workshops, graduate courses and other professional activities. . . . . N.A. 1 2 3 4 5
- 8. Maintain an active interest in appropriate professional organizations and journals. . . . . N.A. 1 2 3 4 5
- 9. Have access to support services necessary to implement programs effectively. . . . . N.A. 1 2 3 4 5

Faculty members in general:

- 10. Are supportive of the goals and activities of the Religious Formation Program. . . . . N.A. 1 2 3 4 5
- 11. Are capable of contributing to the Religious Formation Program. . . . . N.A. 1 2 3 4 5
- 12. Where appropriate, actively participate with students in religious formation activities. . . . . N.A. 1 2 3 4 5

Members of policy-making and advisory boards:

- 13. Have explicit concern for the religious formation policies and programs in the school. . . . . N.A. 1 2 3 4 5

Evaluations

(a) How adequate is the preparation of religious formation personnel in the area of adolescent religious development? . . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
(b) How adequate is the preparation of religious formation personnel in organization and implementation of religious formation programs? . . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
(c) To what extent do religious formation staff keep abreast of new developments in the official teaching of their religious tradition? . . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
(d) To what extent do faculty members provide models of the beliefs and practices of the religious tradition operating the school? . . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5

Comments

B. Formation Activities

Checklist

1. Religious formation activities are derived directly from school's religious philosophy and objectives. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Objectives of the program are adequately specific. . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Objectives of the program are known to students, their families and faculty members. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Careful planning is evident in religious formation activities. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Activities are appropriate to the stage of religious development of students in different grades. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Students are involved in planning and implementing activities where appropriate. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Where possible, an explicit effort is made to coordinate religious formation activities with the material/activities of the Religion Department. . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Activities are planned to arouse students' interest and involvement. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Students with special religious interests are encouraged to participate in religious activities outside the formal minimal expectations or requirements of the school program. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Activities are carefully supervised. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
11. In-service activities are provided for the entire faculty to facilitate their involvement in religious formation activities. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5

Evaluations

(a) <i>How adequate is the planning for formational activities?</i> . . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
(b) <i>How evident is the connection between the school's philosophy and objectives and religious formation activities?</i> . . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
(c) <i>To what extent are the religious formation activities appropriate to the needs and level of understanding of the students?</i> . . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5

(d) How adequately do the number and type of religious formation activities fulfill the religious objectives of the school? . . . . . N.A. 1 2 3 4 5

Comments

C. Formation Materials

Checklist

- |    |  |      |   |   |   |   |   |
|----|--|------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Appropriate materials to interest students in the religious objectives of the school are available in the library and other appropriate locations in the school. . . . .           | N.A. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. | Resource materials for faculty use in the following areas are available (check those present):   |      |   |   |   |   |   |
|    | <u>    </u> a. religious services  |      |   |   |   |   |   |
|    | <u>    </u> b. religious reflection or retreat programs  |      |   |   |   |   |   |
|    | <u>    </u> c. community service programs  |      |   |   |   |   |   |
|    | <u>    </u> d. personal religious development (e.g.,<br>biographies of religious figures,<br>prayerbooks, etc.)  |      |   |   |   |   |   |
| 3. | The director of the Religious Formation Program supplies other staff members with appropriate materials to facilitate their involvement in religious formation activities. . . . . | N.A. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. | The available materials are adequate to meet the needs of the religious formation program. . . . .   | N.A. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. | There is evidence that the collection of materials is of practical use to the staff. . . . .   | N.A. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. | Faculty members involved in the religious formation program are consulted on the materials made available in religious formation programs. . . . .                                 | N.A. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Evaluations

- |     |   |      |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----|---|------|---|---|---|---|---|
| (a) | <i>How adequate is the variety of materials?</i> . . . . .                                      | N.A. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| (b) | <i>How adequate is the quality of materials available?</i> . . . . .                            | N.A. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| (c) | <i>To what extent are materials practical and actually utilized by staff members?</i> . . . . . | N.A. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Comments

D. Methods of Evaluation

Checklist

1. Each phase of the Religious Formation Program is evaluated on a regular basis. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Evaluation is made on the basis of stated objectives. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Student opinions are systematically explored in evaluation of programs. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
4. A variety of evaluative procedures are used to determine outcomes with special emphasis on procedures appropriate to assessing affective goals. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Outcomes of evaluation have a direct impact on program improvement. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Service or religious action programs are evaluated both in terms of their outcomes for those served and in terms of the growth experienced by students. .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Staff involved in the Religious Formation Program have an opportunity to share information and opinions regarding their involvement in religious formation activities. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Parents of students are consulted to determine their level of satisfaction with the program. . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5

Evaluations

(a) <i>How adequate is the overall plan for evaluation of the Religious Formation Program relative to its purposes, objectives and implementation?</i> . . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
(b) <i>How adequate are the procedures that have been developed for the evaluation of the Religious Formation Program?</i> . . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
(c) <i>To what degree is the program of evaluation effective in improving the programs?</i> . . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5

Comments

V OUTCOMES

Evaluations

(a) To what degree do religious formation activities meet the needs and expectations of families patronizing the school? . . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
(b) To what extent does the Religious Formation Program fulfill the expectations for religious formation of the religious tradition sponsoring the school? . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
(c) To what extent do religious formation activities provide at least an adequate level of activities and involvement for each student? . . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
(d) To what extent are the faculty as a group actively involved in participating in religious formation activities and in providing models of religious belief and practice? . . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
(e) To what extent does the program supply special activities for students who have special religious needs or interests (e.g., personal religious problems, a desire for more opportunities for personal religious growth, etc.)? . . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
(f) To what extent is the same level of planning and staffing present in the Religious Formation Program as is present in other programs of the school? . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
(g) To what extent does the Religious Formation Program actually stimulate students' interest and involvement? . . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
(h) To what extent is the Religious Formation Program recognized as an essential component of the school program by faculty, students, and students' families? . . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
(i) To what extent does the Religious Formation Program prepare students to become contributing members of their religious tradition? . . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
(j) To what extent does the atmosphere of the school demonstrate a strong community spirit consistent with the religious values of the tradition sponsoring the school? . . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
(k) To what extent does the climate of the school permit and encourage the exploration of moral and religious questions in the curriculum in general when such questions naturally arise (e.g., in English, social studies, etc.)? . . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5

Comments

VI SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RELIGIOUS FORMATION PROGRAM

1. Describe any changes recently implemented in the Religious Formation Program.

2. What changes are planned for the future?

3. In what respects is the Religious Formation Program most satisfactory and commendable?

4. In what respects is the Religious Formation Program most in need of improvement?

5. Recommend, in order of priority, steps for the correction of weaknesses in the Religious Formation Program.

VII GENERAL EVALUATION OF THE RELIGIOUS FORMATION PROGRAM

Evaluations

(a) To what extent is the Religious Formation Program meeting the religious needs of the students (as indicated in the School and Community Report)? . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
(b) To what extent is the Religious Formation Program meeting the religious goals of the school as stated in the Philosophy and Objectives)? . . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
(c) To what extent is the school identifying problems in the Religious Formation Program? . . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5
(d) To what extent is the school seeking solutions to these problems? . . . . .	N.A.	1	2	3	4	5

Comments