

**GOALS**

**AND**

**CRITERIA**

**Sacred Heart Schools in the United States**

Schools of the Sacred Heart commit themselves to educate to:

- faith which is relevant in a secularized world
- a deep respect for intellectual values
- a social awareness which impels to action
- the building of community as a Christian value
- personal growth in an atmosphere of wise freedom

## **PREAMBLE**

### **To The Goals and Criteria for Sacred Heart Schools in the United States**

The schools of the Sacred Heart in the United States, members of a world-wide network, offer an education that is marked by a distinctive spirit. It is of the essence of a Sacred Heart school that it be deeply concerned for each student's total development: spiritual, intellectual, emotional, physical. It is of the essence of a Sacred Heart school that it emphasize serious study, that it educate to social responsibility, and that it lay the foundations of a strong faith.

Many educators, especially Christian educators, will find much that they can identify with in the stated purposes of Sacred Heart schools. Given the vast needs of the world, of the Church in the United States, of children and their parents, it should be cause for rejoicing that this is so -- that many seek to meet these complex challenges in a similar fashion. But what will always be distinctive about the schools of the Sacred Heart is the long tradition from which they come. This tradition, which has permeated the training of the Religious of the Sacred Heart, is familiar to the Religious who teach in the schools, but perhaps less familiar to the lay colleagues who work so closely with them. It has been experientially familiar to generations of Sacred Heart students who, as alumnae, send their children to receive the education they themselves valued so highly.

For the Religious of the Sacred Heart, education has always been viewed as a *mission* of the most demanding kind. "The Religious of the Sacred Heart are consecrated by their vocation to education."<sup>1</sup> Members of the Society drew up the first *Plan of Studies* in 1805, five years after their own founding, and reformulated it ten times over the next 150 years. Sacred Heart Schools first held to a single, uniform curriculum, but in 1958 a document significantly entitled *Spirit and Plan of Studies* "deliberately puts aside all details of syllabus" noting that "these are bound to vary according to time and place," and tries to "give a clear idea of a *spirit*...which will hold good for every work of education"<sup>2</sup> that the Society might undertake.

If one seeks the timeless element in Sacred Heart education, one must look to that spirit, for externals and customs were always seen as subject to change. Timelessness has never meant rigid adherence to a single program or method. Revision of curriculum was always a concern of the Society's General Congregations, which had the highest decision-making authority in the Order.

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<sup>1</sup>*Constitutions of the Society of the Sacred Heart*, 111,4,i.

<sup>2</sup>*Spirit and Plan of Studies*, p.7.

*Whatever/the orientation given to studies/may be, there must be no forgetting that it means the formation of the whole woman with a view to her own vocation in the circumstances and the age in which she has to live.<sup>3</sup>*

The present paper resembles others in which, since 1967, the Society of the Sacred Heart has defined itself and its mission in the contemporary Church. Like these, it does not pretend to say the last word on its subject. Like these, it draws upon the texts of the Second Vatican Council, for it is in the Sacred Heart tradition to be deeply loyal to the Church, and to respond swiftly to the challenges and opportunities the Church offers. For this reason, the evolution of the schools of the Sacred Heart makes little sense if viewed outside the context of the history of the Catholic Church.

In the last ten years the American schools of the Sacred Heart, following the spirit of the Society and of the Church, have adapted their programs and methods to suit the special situation of each school. The decentralization of control which made this possible was embarked upon in full confidence that the presence of Religious of the Sacred Heart alone would (so it was assumed) assure that the essentials of Sacred Heart education would be preserved.

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<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 13.

It is never safe, however, to assume too much. Values taken for granted or left unarticulated can become inoperative. Patterns of leadership and governance, the make-up of faculties and student bodies have changed rapidly, and as the schools of the Sacred Heart enter the mainstream of American independent education, they feel its characteristic pressures and strains. As they become increasingly diverse, it becomes increasingly necessary to respond to the question: "What makes a Sacred Heart school?" Independent but never isolated, every Sacred Heart school needs to feel the strength of belonging to a larger whole, of sharing principles and values, broad purposes, hopes and ambitions.

The following pages attempt to delineate what a Sacred Heart school is in the 1970's. They draw upon the Society's basic documents, as well as working papers recently developed by the Heads of Schools. This paper therefore repeats much that will be familiar to Religious of the Sacred Heart and to those close to the Society in recent years.

Five *Goals* are stated, and several *Criteria* are given for each. The first three Goals are taken directly from the section on education in the documents of the Society's 1970 General Chapter. The Criteria are signs which indicate that the Goal is being effectively pursued.

The Goals and Criteria are *sine qua non* for every school that belongs to the Sacred Heart network. They provide the framework within which each school is to develop specific *Objectives* appropriate to its local situation. Means of evaluation and accountability have also been designed, so that each school, and the network as a whole, may draw maximum benefit from this process.

Approved by the Interprovincial Board  
April 26, 1975

**GOAL I**  
**FAITH WHICH IS RELEVANT IN A**  
**SECULARIZED WORLD**

**Criteria for Goal I:**

1. The school recognizes its life force in the love of Jesus Christ by supporting in concrete ways the value of reflection and of prayer.
2. The total educational program affirms the belief that there is meaning in life and thereby fosters within the school community a sense of hope.
3. The religious studies program probes the relationship of God to man and to the world.
4. The school provides education to decision-making in the light of Christian principles.
5. The school presents itself to the wider community as a Christ-centered institution within the evolving tradition of the Church.



**GOAL II**  
**A DEEP RESPECT FOR**  
**INTELLECTUAL VALUES**

**Criteria for Goal II:**

1. The course of study is intellectually challenging.
2. Serious study and a love of learning are encouraged.
3. Program development is based on research and evaluation.
4. Teaching/learning styles promote the development of persons who are knowledgeable, questioning, thoughtful and integrated.
5. Opportunities are provided for experiential education which includes the element of reflection.
6. The curriculum encourages the development of aesthetic values and the creative use of the imagination.

**GOAL III**  
**A SOCIAL AWARENESS WHICH IMPELS**  
**TO ACTION**

**Criteria for Goal III:**

1. The school awakens a critical sense which leads to reflection on our society and its values.
2. The curriculum includes study of the problems of the world community.
3. The school provides the knowledge and skills needed for effective action on the problems of oppression and injustice.
4. The school has programs which enable students to become actively involved in the wider community.

**GOAL IV**  
**THE BUILDING OF COMMUNITY**  
**AS A CHRISTIAN VALUE**

**Criteria for Goal IV:**

1. Skills needed to build community are taught and opportunities to exercise those skills are provided.
2. School policies and practices are established and reviewed in the light of Christian principles.
3. The school provides experiences of diversity which are designed to develop an understanding and appreciation of various races, religions and cultures.
4. An effective financial aid program supports socio-economic diversity.
5. The life of the school community is deepened by an understanding of the purposes and evolving tradition of Sacred Heart education.
6. The school participates actively in the national and international network of Sacred Heart schools.
7. The program is designed to help students take their place as responsible citizens in an interdependent world.

**GOAL V**  
**PERSONAL GROWTH IN AN ATMOSPHERE**  
**OF WISE FREEDOM**

**Criteria for Goal V:**

1. Genuine concern for each member of the school community is a priority.
2. Students learn to deal with their gifts and limitations in a growth-producing way.
3. Students are helped to share their knowledge and gifts with others.
4. School policies and practices further the development of self-discipline.
5. The school provides for the development of leadership.