



Root Beliefs, Mission, Values, and Schoolwide Learning Expectations (SLEs)

As a Catholic school, we hold these beliefs that are central to our identity as a school:

<i>Root Belief #1</i>	<i>Rationale</i>
<i>We believe in One God, Father, Son & Holy Spirit.</i>	<p>Visitation Catholic STEM Academy is a parish school, thus, it is a ministry of the parish and an extension of the mission of the Catholic Church. We are guided by God and our Catholic foundation in all things. Catholic education is rooted in history and it is rooted in transcendent values.</p> <p>As a parish school, the mystery of the Trinity is an essential belief. The Trinity reveals that God is relational. Through our communion and through our diversity, we encounter God. You do not need to be Catholic to be a student at Visitation because God’s grace is a gift for all people.</p>

<i>Root Belief #2</i>	<i>Rationale</i>
<i>Every human is a unique creation of God.</i>	<p>The story of the Visitation grounds us in the joy of God’s gift of creation. After the Angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she would be the mother of God, she traveled with haste to visit Elizabeth. “When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the infant [John the Baptist] leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, “Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.”” (Luke 1: 41-43)</p> <p>Visitation is a community where we joyfully encounter Christ in one another. Every member of our community brings us to an encounter with Christ. Every student, staff member, teacher and school leader comes to school with different experiences and prior knowledge. We all learn at different rates and in different ways. And we all hunger for a deeper relationship with God.</p>

<i>Root Belief #3</i>	<i>Rationale</i>
<p><i>God created us to be a diverse community of faith.</i></p>	<p>This is a root belief of our community because we have students of many races, cultures and ethnicities and all are important and celebrated.</p> <p>We are a Catholic faith community so our beliefs are rooted in the truths of the church. Pope Francis speaks of our faith as a faith of “encounter.” In the encyclical Lumen Fidei (2013, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20130629_enciclica-lumen-fidei.html), Pope Francis wrote, “through our encounter with others, our gaze rises to a truth greater than ourselves.” With the words of Pope Francis in mind, diversity and community are grace filled gifts, shared with us to strengthen our understanding of God, ourselves, and others, and ultimately to strengthen our relationship with God.</p> <p>We believe in the mystery of the Trinity, that God is one being in three Persons. God is relational and so as People of God, we are also made in relationship to God and to each other. By sending his son, Jesus Christ, God demonstrated the significance and value of the human person. We believe that Jesus Christ was fully man and fully divine, connected to God through the Person of the Son. Jesus ultimately suffered, died, conquered death, and rose to life, signaling God’s boundless love for all humanity and almighty power over death and sin. It is due to God’s immeasurable love for humanity, that we are intrinsically bound to love one another as God loves us. It is through this loving relationship with God, that we are brought closer to God by loving one another. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1, 2018. http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P2.HTM)</p>

<i>Root Belief #4</i>	<i>Rationale</i>
<p><i>God is in all things.</i></p>	<p>This is a root belief for our community because we think beyond our own needs, rather, we see ourselves in relationship to all of God’s creation.</p> <p>This belief is a lens for our worldview, it instills us with a respect for the dignity of all human life. Moved by this principle, we are compelled to love and to embrace everyone in our community. Serving others is what Jesus called us to do. In the Gospels, Jesus cures the slave of a humble centurion (Luke 7: 1-10), shows respect to a samaritan woman at Jacob’s well (John 4), and washes the feet of His disciples on the same night He is handed over to be crucified (John 13). These examples of Jesus’s love, demonstrate the boundless love and mercy of God, and we are all called to give witness to God’s presence on earth through the way we live.</p> <p>God is in all things, Truth comes from God. Science, technology, engineering, and math complement theology, philosophy, and our faith. STEM expands the human capacity to understand the world, thus guiding us to a fuller understanding of ourselves and our relationship to God. STEM and theology are not exclusive of each other. Rather, together they reveal the fullness and greatness of our loving God. We engage the mind and imagination of all students through STEM, and all of our academic efforts enhance our discipleship in Jesus Christ.</p>

<i>Root Belief #5</i>	<i>Rationale</i>
<i>Catholic education forms the human soul.</i>	<p>This is a root belief of our community because we should be attracted to the highest things that yearn in our souls.</p> <p>Our graduates will have an encounter with Jesus Christ that will remain as a profound and unforgettable experience, resonating with the graduate throughout all of life. Visitation Catholic STEM Academy transforms the individual lives of our graduates who in turn will transform the lives of others in the communities, parishes, and families that they will serve in the future. In effect, graduates from Visitation Catholic STEM Academy will transform the world.</p>

Mission Statement

An essential element of systematic school improvement is a clear statement and understanding of the school's mission and philosophy. A clear mission and philosophy explicitly state who the school is, who the school serves, and what the school intends to accomplish. (From WCEA/WASC Accreditation Manual)

<i>Mission Statement</i>
<i>Visitation Catholic STEM Academy was founded so that every member of our community could form a relationship with Christ. Visitation is guided by the virtues of Mary and the Catholic faith. In partnership with families and the parish, we inspire a diverse community of learners to follow Christ, pursue understanding, and transform the world, in a STEM-integrated, project-based environment.</i>

Core Values

We watch what we do to see what we believe. The following actions are the verbs that will become habits at our school to make our beliefs known.

<i>Core Value #1</i>	<i>Rationale</i>
<i>Pray</i>	We commit to this habitual action because we are a Catholic School and we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.

<i>Core Value #2</i>	<i>Rationale</i>
<i>Excel</i>	We commit to this habitual action because we strive for excellence in all our academic pursuits. We are committed to innovation in our teaching, and we commit to continuous self-improvement to achieve excellence in all our endeavors.

<i>Core Value #3</i>	<i>Rationale</i>
<i>Love</i>	We commit to this habitual action because love activates, empowers and encourages the growth of our other core values. Love compels us to service. Serving the needy and the marginalized helps us to understand God's love in the world.

<i>Core Value #4</i>	<i>Rationale</i>
<i>Embrace</i>	We commit to this habitual action because we encounter a diverse community of learners. We have students of many races, cultures and ethnicities and all are important and celebrated.

<i>Core Value #5</i>	<i>Rationale</i>
<i>Persevere</i>	<p>We commit to this habitual action because STEM education emphasizes learning as an ongoing process. Rather than simply right or wrong, STEM education emphasizes ongoing improvement, problem solving, and critical self-reflection. The Engineering Design Process is a cycle of improvement that includes ask questions, define the problem, develop solutions, and explain results.</p> <p>As a spiritual practice, perseverance reflects Mary's dedication as the mother of Jesus. There was no room in the inn, yet Mary and Joseph found a home. There was no wine at the wedding party, but Mary's joy led to Jesus's first miracle. And after Jesus was taken from the cross, Mary's heart must have been broken yet her faith remained steadfast until the resurrection. Mary's dedication as the Mother of God is a model of perseverance.</p>

Schoolwide Learning Expectations

Statements of what a student should know, understand, value, and be able to do by graduation. These learning outcomes are collaboratively developed and represent the focus of the entire school community. These may be different than core values but they can also be the same.

A Graduate of Visitation Catholic STEM Academy will demonstrate...

1. Faith
 - a. Pray and participate in the sacramental life of the Catholic Church.
 - b. Demonstrate knowledge of the traditions, teachings and practices of the Catholic Church.
 - c. Demonstrate integrity through integration of faith and morality for guidance in decision making.
2. Lifelong Learning
 - a. Understand and apply knowledge in all academic areas, including science, technology, engineering, mathematics.
 - b. Communicate thoughts and opinions effectively and respectfully
 - c. Analyze, interpret, evaluate, and think critically to solve problems using a variety of resources and strategies, including project-based learning.
 - d. Persevere for excellence in all endeavors, valuing every life situation as a learning experience.
3. Loving Kindness
 - a. Demonstrate tolerance, courtesy, and respect among people of all cultures.
 - b. Act as stewards of the earth through faithful participation in school and parish service projects on local and global levels.
 - c. Embrace all students, families, parishioners, and community members.