

STANDARDS FOR QUALITY CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS
WITHIN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA

It is the hope of the Church of Philadelphia that every parish have its own school and that every parent wishing to send a child to a Catholic school will be able to do so (see for example canons 528, 798, 800). This document outlines the standards by which a parish fulfills its mission to provide quality Catholic education for the children of the parish. The pastor who is ultimately responsible for the Catholic education of his parishioners is expected to review these guidelines periodically with appropriate organizations within the parish in order to ensure that the school fulfills its mission and ever strives to improve itself. It is to be noted that, in all aspects regarding matters of faith and morals, as determined by the Archbishop, the following serve as directives rather than recommendations.

A. CATHOLIC IDENTITY

1. A Catholic parish elementary school must promote the mission of the Catholic Church as it is lived out in the local parish setting. To accomplish this mission, the school must create a faith community in which the message of the Gospel is lived and the teachings of the Magisterium of the Church are clearly proclaimed. The *faith believed* is the *faith celebrated* by the students and faculty who participate in the sacramental life of the Church. The *faith believed* is the *faith lived* in a moral life which is determined by the demands of the Gospel. The *faith believed* is the *faith prayed* through acts of adoration, praise, thanksgiving, and petition. All who attend and serve within the Catholic school are provided with opportunities to know, celebrate and contemplate the mystery of Jesus Christ as it is reflected in the teachings of the Catholic Church. All who attend and serve within the Catholic school are required to participate. (Catechism of the Catholic Church and The General Directory for Catechesis #85-86)
2. In a Catholic school, the principal and the faculty must be practicing Catholics. A “practicing Catholic” is one who participates in the life of the Church by attending Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation, by receiving the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist, and by living a life that is in conformity with the moral and ethical teachings of the magisterium of the Church. A teacher’s rejection or violation of the doctrines, laws, or norms of the Roman Catholic Church, public immorality, or public scandal could result in either suspension or termination of employment. In matters which concern the Church’s Teaching, whether in faith and/or morals, the Archbishop of Philadelphia or his delegate shall be the ultimate judge, and his decisions are not subject to appeal beyond canonical guarantees.

All full-time teachers in the Catholic schools of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia are required to receive **18.0 credits (180 hours)** of Catholic theology/religious instruction within their first eight years of teaching. The specific stipulations of this directive are noted in the *Archdiocesan Religion Certificate Policy* brochure.

3. The secretarial staff and the maintenance staff must reflect the Catholic values of the school.
4. The school is an integral part of the Catholic life of the parish and must demonstrate this to the parish community through message, worship, community, and service.
5. The parish religious education program must follow all the policies and procedures established by the Office for Catechetical Formation and sacramental guidelines of the Office for Worship.
6. Parents/Guardians are expected to support the mission and philosophy of the Catholic school.

B. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

1. The mission statement and the goals of the parish school must be clearly stated and be consistent with the mission statement of the parish itself and with the mission statement of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.
2. The parish elementary school must follow all educational policies and procedures and curriculum guidelines established by and available through the Office of Catholic Education.
3. It is expected that a separate classroom exist for each grade level within the school.
4. The school is expected to be accredited by the Middle States Commission on Elementary Schools.
5. The school must implement the standards that have been established by the Office of Catholic Education for each academic discipline (Religion, Mathematics, Integrated Language Arts, Social Studies, Science, Art, Music, Physical Education, Technology) and for the use and integration of Technology throughout the content areas. Refer to Parish

Elementary Schools Policies and Procedures 2000 as well as curriculum guidelines available through the Office of Catholic Education.

C. PERSONNEL

1. All administrators and faculty are expected to be approved by the Office of Catholic Education and meet the criteria established by the Office of Catholic Education.
2. It is expected that qualified teachers are assigned by the pastor and principal for every grade (Pre-kindergarten through eighth) and for the academic areas enumerated in B-5.
3. All professional staff are expected to participate in on-going staff development for continued quality Catholic education as per the archdiocesan and state guidelines.

D. CLASS SIZE

Consultation with the pastor and principal as to the specific needs of a particular school is *critical* in determining class size. The following chart indicates the recommended maximum number of students who should be present in each classroom.

	<u>Without Aide</u>	<u>One Aide</u>	<u>Two Aides</u>
<u>Pre-Kindergarten*</u>			
3 yr. olds	12	13-17	18-22
4 yr. olds	17	18-21	22-25
Combined 3 & 4 year olds	15	16-19	20-23
<u>Kindergarten*</u>	25	26-29	30
<u>Grades 1-3</u>	30 students		
<u>Grades 4-8</u>	35 students		

* See designated space for Early Childhood in section E

E. PROGRAM CAPACITY AND SCHOOL FACILITIES

Consultation with the pastor and principal as to the specific needs of a particular school is *critical* in determining program capacity. The program capacity of a school is determined by considering both the availability and appropriateness of the facilities. All school buildings must comply with all applicable fire, safety, and health code regulations in accord with state and local mandates. A program of preventive maintenance, cleanliness, and repairs should be established for each school building.

Facilities for offering a quality Catholic Educational Program

- Computer lab and computers with Internet access placed in individual classrooms throughout the school or laptop computers on a portable cart
- Music education room reserved for music instruction
- Art education room reserved for art instruction
- Library with books, periodicals, newspapers, projectors, SMARTBoard, computer stations with Internet access
- Gym or designated space for physical education activities
- Science Lab for conducting science experiments
- A room for Honors Math, where appropriate
- Cafeteria and kitchen for student use at lunch time
- Space for Government-Funded Programs

Title I (if applicable)

Services provided by Title I vary but classroom space or a portable classroom is needed to accommodate Title I staff to provide service to the students. Consultation with the principal is needed to determine the space that is needed.

Act 89

Services provided by Act 89 vary but classroom space or a portable classroom needed to accommodate Act 89 staff in order to service our students. Consultation with the principal is needed to determine space needed.

- Designated Space for Early Childhood Programs
Regulations from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, State Board of Private Academic Schools:

Floor Space

Indoor

There shall be a minimum of 35 square feet of floor space per child in the indoor classrooms, exclusive of offices, sanitary facilities, storage spaces and other auxiliary rooms. Classrooms shall have a minimum height of 8 foot ceilings.

Outdoor

There shall be a minimum of 60 square feet of accessible space per child in outdoor activity area, which shall be free of hazards. Outdoor play areas which are adjacent to traffic, steep banks, water, or other unsafe areas shall be fenced.

Restrooms

There shall be at least one flush toilet and one washbowl for every 15 children. If the toilet and washbowl facilities are not child size, platforms or steps of proper size shall be provided.

Heating

Radiators, fireplaces, and heating and cooling devices in the indoor classrooms shall be equipped with shields or guards for providing protection against contact injuries. Kerosene, electric, or other types of portable heaters may not be used as heating devices in classrooms.

- Administrative Offices
 - Principal's Office
 - Vice-Principal's Office (if applicable)
 - Secretary's Office or Main Office
 - Faculty Room
 - Health Room
 - Conference Room for Parents/Teachers/Administration
 - Instructional Resource Space
 - Work Room (machinery, equipment, supplies, book room, stationery etc.)

- Handicapped Accessible (Capital Projects)

- Maintenance Supply Room
- Alternative Space

F. FINANCES

1. It is expected that the pastor, the principal, and the Parish Finance Committee review annually the operating budget of the parish school.
2. The pastor, in consultation with the Parish Finance Committee, is responsible for determining the most suitable amount of tuition and the amount of parish subsidy that are needed to fund the operating budget of the parish school.

Parish school tuition rates for the next school year should be announced to parishioners prior to registration and re-registration; however, this announcement should be made no later than March 31. Annual moderate increments in tuition are to be expected; however, they are not to exceed \$200.00 annually.
3. Where necessary, and in consultation with Parish Financial Services, the parish subsidy may be reduced gradually to 35% of the total operating costs of the parish school.
4. Parents of non-Catholic students should be charged at least 75% of the per-pupil costs for operating the parish school; however, efforts should be made to charge parents of non-Catholic students 100% of the total cost per pupil.
5. The pastor, in consultation with the Parish Finance Committee, should establish procedures respecting the privacy and dignity of each family for granting tuition reductions for families with proven financial need.
6. The parish school should pay all bills on a timely basis.
7. The establishment of an endowment fund could provide revenue for operating the parish school.

8. Each school should develop a financial plan which includes a projection of revenue and expenditures for the next three years.

For further clarification of the above standards, please refer to the following documents:

- Parish Elementary School Policies and Procedures 2000
- Early Childhood Guidelines 1998
- Personnel Handbook for Parish Elementary School Lay Teachers 1997
- Personnel Handbook for Parish Lay Principals and Directors of Religious Education 1997