

VALUE OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

The value of Catholic schools has been recognized and made abundantly clear by the Holy Father as well as the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). Statements of support can be found in Second Vatican Council documents, Pope John Paul II's 1999 exhortation, *The Church in America, The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* by Pio Cardinal Laghi and Jose Saraiva Martins, *To Teach as Jesus Did* by the USCCB in 1972 and the most recent 2005 statement by U.S. Bishops entitled, *Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools in the Third Millennium*.

In their 2005 statement the Bishops recognize the purpose and value of Catholic schools by stating:

Catholic schools provide young people with sound Church teaching through a broad-based curriculum, where faith and culture are intertwined in all areas of a school's life. By equipping our young people with a sound education, rooted in the Gospel message, the Person of Jesus Christ, and rich in the cherished traditions and liturgical practices of our faith, we ensure that they have the foundation to live morally and uprightly in our complex modern world.

The bishops quoted from, *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*, as follows:

The Catholic school participates in the evangelizing mission of the Church and is the privileged environment in which Christian education is carried out. In this way Catholic schools are at once places of evangelization, of complete formation, of inculturation, of apprenticeship in a lively dialogue between young people of different religions and social backgrounds.

In referring to the document entitled, *To Teach as Jesus Did*, the bishops added:

We are convinced that Catholic schools continue to be the most effective means available to the Church for the education of children and young people who are the future of the Church.

TYPES OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Types of Catholic schools have been defined in the book, *Building Better Boards*, by Lourdes Sheehan and published by National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA). They are as follows:

Parish School

A parish school is part of the educational mission of the parish for which the pastor is the canonical administrator. He delegates, according to diocesan policy, administrative responsibilities to the school principal, who is accountable to him.

Diocesan Schools

Diocesan schools function as part of the diocese and the principal is usually accountable to the bishop through the superintendent of schools.

(In the Pueblo diocese the principal is accountable to the bishop through board members appointed by him. The board chair and a chaplain for the school are also appointed by the Bishop.)

Private Catholic Schools

A private Catholic school is owned and operated by a religious congregation or a lay boards of trustees. In order to call themselves Catholic, these institutions receive formal approval from the diocesan bishop and commit themselves to follow diocesan norms regarding religious education programs and the Catholicity of the school.

Regional or Interparish School

A regional or interparish school is a school supported by more than one parish. One pastor is usually appointed by the diocese as the school's canonical administrator. This person, representing the other pastors, is the one to whom the principal is accountable.

TYPES OF SCHOOL BOARDS

Four types of school boards are listed in the book, *Building Better Boards*, written by Lourdes Sheehan and published by the National Catholic Education Association. These types are defined as follows:

Jurisdictional

A jurisdictional board not only legislates but also controls. It has final authority and total jurisdiction for all areas of educational policy and administration, as well as the legislative power to enact policy. There are no jurisdictional boards in the Catholic Church.

Board with Limited Jurisdiction

A board with limited jurisdiction has power limited to certain areas of educational concern. It has final, but not total jurisdiction, since the diocesan bishop has jurisdiction over the religious education and Catholicity of all schools including private schools. Most religious congregations have canonically reserved powers.

Consultative

A consultative board operates in the policy-making process by formulating and adapting, but never enacting policy. This type of board is more in keeping with shared decision-making in the Catholic Church because of the consultative status of the diocesan Presbyteral council and the diocesan finance council. The constituting authority establishes those areas where the board is to be consulted. Such action is usually made effective by the board's constitution.

Regulatory

A regulatory board enacts or uses existing rules and regulations to govern the operation of its institutions. This type board is considered administrative rather than policy-making or consultative. Public school boards are usually designated as regulatory.

Only consultative boards and boards with limited jurisdiction are appropriate models for Catholic School Boards.

A code of ethics for board members and using the consensus model for decision making can be found in **Appendix A**.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The roles and responsibilities of the Bishop, Superintendent, Pastor, School Board, Principal, Director, Teachers, and Parents are critical to the success of Catholic school education in the Diocese of Pueblo.

BISHOP

The responsibility for the educational apostolate in the Diocese of Pueblo belongs to the Bishop. He is in charge of the Diocese and is the spiritual leader of all the faithful within the diocese.

SUPERINTENDENT OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

The Superintendent of Catholic Schools has been appointed by the Bishop as his delegate in all matters pertaining to Catholic schools. As such his/her responsibilities include:

1. Ensuring the Catholicity of all Catholic preschools and elementary schools in the diocese
2. Providing leadership and support to the principals and directors of all Catholic preschools and elementary schools
3. Determining guidelines in regards to the qualifications, hiring, supervision, and evaluation of Catholic school principals and teachers.
4. Taking appropriate action to ensure the quality of Catholic education.
5. Visiting the schools and maintaining communication with pastors, principals, and preschools directors
6. Directing planning for new schools.
7. Providing consultative services to the pastor, principal, and preschool director.
8. Keeping schools informed of legal and school safety issues.
9. Implementing the policies and procedures of the Diocese in regards to schools.
10. Representing the schools of the diocese with national, state, and other outside agencies

PASTOR

The pastor is the primary spiritual leader of the parish. He is responsible for the educational ministry in the parish. The pastor serves as an ex-officio member of the local board. As such, his responsibilities are as follows:

1. Participating in all board meetings, sharing his wisdom and experience
2. Hiring the principal in collaboration with the board and the diocesan superintendent of schools, or his/her delegate
3. Approving all decisions and policies, particularly those related to religious education
4. Approving the budget prepared by the principal and reviewed by the board
5. Participating in the principal performance review process that is initiated by the diocesan superintendent
6. Cooperating in the initiation and implementation of the school's development plans, student recruitment efforts and long range plans
7. Providing sacramental opportunities for faculty and students
8. Cooperating with the principal in providing faith formation opportunities for faculty and students

For interparish/regional schools one pastor should be selected/appointed to be the pastor for the school program. It will be his responsibility to provide information about board activities to the pastors of the other parishes and to secure their approval for major decisions (for example, the selection of the principal, the approval of the annual budget, the approval of sacramental preparation programs). Pastors of parishes sponsoring the school should specify what authority is given to the board and what decisions are reserved to the pastors.

SCHOOL BOARDS OR COMMITTEES

"The role of the board in a Catholic school is to provide opportunities for representative members of the community to come together to work with diocesan and parish staffs in providing direction for educational programs. Such groups provide unity, direction, and stability for educational efforts, and the opportunity for dedicated people, lay, religious, and clergy, to participate in the church's educational ministry." (Building Better Boards by Lourdes Sheehan, RSM, Ed.D.)

Specific Roles of the Board or Committee

1. With the pastor and principal, model faith community in a spirit of cooperation and interdependence.
2. Develop policies that will enable a school to reach its goals.
3. Review and give advice on the annual school budget:
 - a. Determine sources of funding
 - b. Set rates of tuition
 - c. Request parish subsidy/grants
4. In collaboration with the pastor and the diocesan superintendent, or his/her delegate, hire the principal to administer the school and to implement diocesan and local policies.
5. Act as public relations arm of the school.
6. Represent its constituency.
7. Participate in the principal performance review process according to established by-laws.
8. Be punctual for and prepared for all meetings
9. Collaborate in the school's development plans, student recruitment and long- range plans.
10. Keep minutes of all board meetings.
11. Evaluate its performance on a yearly basis (The evaluation tool in the diocesan Handbook for Parish Councils can be adapted for school board use. See

Appendix A

12. Make sure that the board handbook contains the following:
 - a. Philosophy
 - b. By-laws/constitutions
 - c. Policies in regard to:
 - i. Principal
 - ii. Personnel
 - iii. Students/Parents
 - iv. Plant
 - v. Finances
 - d. Formal minutes
 - e. Financial information such as budgets
 - f. Confidentiality

PRINCIPAL

The principal is the educational leader and executive officer of the board. As such, his/her responsibilities include:

1. Developing the monthly agenda with the chairperson
2. Preparing and submitting policy recommendations to the board
3. Keeping the board informed about the school's operation
4. Keeping the board informed on policy implementation
5. Informing the board of diocesan processes and procedures
6. Providing in-service and educational direction to the board
7. Reporting periodically on year to date finances

The principal is the educational and spiritual leader of the school. As such, his/her responsibilities include:

1. Administering the school
2. Implementing diocesan and local policies
3. Hiring the faculty
4. Preparing the annual budget
5. Developing the curriculum and educational programs in collaboration with the faculty.
6. Providing leadership in the implementation of the school's long-range plan, development plans and student recruitment.
7. Participating in the principal performance review
8. Keeping the pastor informed on important happenings at school
9. Providing faith development opportunities for the faculty.

TEACHER

Catholic school teachers serve actively in the education and faith development of their students. Catholic school teachers are expected to abide by the standards of faith, morals and teachings of the Catholic Church. They shall fulfill the duties outlined in the teacher job description and those stated in the contract. Under the supervision of the principal/director, the teacher is responsible for:

1. Striving to achieve the goals of Catholic education
2. Assuming responsibility for the leadership and management of the grades or classes assigned
3. Developing and implementing a daily instructional program according to the needs of the students and established curriculum
4. Maintaining accurate records of attendance, etc. as required by the School, the Diocese of Pueblo, and the State of Colorado
5. Establishing positive public relations within and outside the school community

PRESCHOOL DIRECTOR

The preschool director is responsible for the administration of the Catholic preschool. The director provides leadership in all phases of the educational process.

Under the supervision of the principal and/or pastor, the director is responsible for:

1. Providing leadership in the faith, academic, and administrative dimensions of the preschool program
2. Formulating, evaluating, and periodically revising the philosophy of the preschool program.
3. Maintaining a continuous plan for the supervision and evaluation of the teachers and support staff
4. Developing an ongoing program to ensure the religious and professional development of the faculty
5. Making recommendations to the pastor regarding the hiring and dismissing of teachers and support staff.
6. Developing, evaluating, and revising the preschool curriculum according to Diocesan guidelines.

7. Maintaining appropriate records as required by the Diocese of Pueblo and the State of Colorado
8. Ensuring the maintenance and safety of the school buildings according to local procedures
9. Administering the preschool program budget
10. Promoting good public relations

PARENTS

Children are priceless gifts from God. Their upbringing in a Christian environment is an awesome responsibility for parents, who are the primary and principal educators of their children. The Catholic school provides assistance to parents through educational programs, which endeavor to educate children, spiritually, intellectually, socially, and physically. Parents in turn are expected to:

1. Cooperate with the principal and teachers in adhering to policies spelled out in the parent handbook
2. Support the religious education program and Gospel values taught in the school
3. Be Christian role models for their children
4. Keep informed of school policies and academic requirements
5. Show an interest in school events and participate in school activities such as parent-teacher conferences and fund raising activities
6. Cooperate with the pastor and the school in regard to sacramental guidelines
7. Resolve concerns and conflicts with appropriate parties and avoid spreading negative and inaccurate information to the community at large
8. Participate in parent-teacher organizations and be willing to serve on committees as the need arises
9. Impress upon their children the need to pay attention, obey the rules, and develop proper study habits
10. Make sure their children attend school regularly
11. Discuss report cards and school assignments with their children
12. Bring to the attention of school authorities any learning problems or condition that may relate to their children's education

NEW SCHOOL OPENINGS

Guidelines to follow when a group chooses to open a Catholic school:

1. Discuss the proposal and obtain approval to proceed from the local pastor and the Parish Council.
2. Obtain approval from the Superintendent before initiating any formal steps in the process of opening a new school.
3. Form a committee to prepare an informal survey and conduct it with parish leadership, parish organizations, parishioners and people in the area who might be interested in sending their children to a Catholic school.
4. Share survey results with the Pastor, Parish Council, and the Superintendent.
5. If sufficient interest is expressed, and approval to proceed is given by the Pastor, Parish Council, and the Superintendent, a Steering Committee should be appointed by the Parish Council to conduct a feasibility study and prepare a formal written proposal.
 - a. Members of the Steering Committee should include the following: Pastor, Chairperson of the Finance Council, Director of Religious Education, and a cross section of parishioners.
 - b. The Chairperson for the Steering Committee should be appointed by the Pastor.
 - c. The feasibility study should contain the following components: projected enrollment; staffing plan and program; survey of parents and parishioners; impact on other schools and parishes; public relations/communications plan; governance plan; five year financial projection and funding plan; the parishes ability to sustain a school ministry along with its other existing ministries; a development plan that includes scholarship and fund raising plans; and any other information the Steering Committee deems appropriate.
6. The Superintendent will review the proposal and present the plan to the Bishop for his approval. Only with the approval of the Bishop may a school call itself "Catholic" or use the term "Catholic" in its title and/or communication with the public.
7. If the proposal includes construction or extensive renovation, the Diocesan Finance Council must also be consulted.

CLOSING A SCHOOL

A thorough study of the situation and alternatives will be conducted. The Superintendent will then present recommendations to the Bishop. The actual decision to close a school can be made only by the Bishop of Pueblo.

Sufficient time should be provided in announcing a closure to allow faculty to seek employment and for students to enroll in local available schools.

ESTABLISHMENT, EXPANSION OR ELIMINATION OF SCHOOL PROGRAMS

The superintendent of Catholic schools should be informed by the principal, pastor or school board in the event grade levels are added or eliminated.

SCHOOL HANDBOOKS

Each school is required to develop and distribute a parent/student handbook. This handbook should state the philosophy, mission, rules, and regulations of the school.

In addition, each school should develop and distribute a faculty handbook containing rules, regulations and expectations of Staff members. Both, the parent/student handbook and the faculty handbook are not to be seen as contracts between the school and the parent or student, and with the school and faculty.

Both handbooks should be reviewed and updated annually and published prior to the opening of the school year. Copies should be submitted to the Office of Catholic Schools at the beginning of each school year.

Checklists are included in **Appendix B** and may be used as a resource for developing and writing school handbooks.

ACADEMIC CALENDAR AND LENGTH OF SCHOOL DAY

The diocese does not publish a school calendar. Each school should establish a school calendar in accord with the local public school district. The diocese does expect that each diocesan/parish school adhere closely to the required number of teacher-pupil contact days and hours as determined by each local public school district.

Colorado law # 22-33-104 indicates the following regarding attendance in private schools:

Length of School Year/Days: Attendance at a private school satisfies the Colorado compulsory school attendance law if enrolled for a minimum of 172 days.

CLOSURE DUE TO WEATHER OR FACILITY CONDITIONS

Ordinarily, a school will close for snow if the local public school district is closed or if local conditions of faculty absences warrant closure.

Each school should develop and disseminate local policies that address closure and special schedules for weather or facility conditions. These policies should include procedures for faculty and media notification.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

A. Crisis Plans

All principals/directors in cooperation with the faculty should develop written general and specific crisis procedure plans, which shall be reviewed annually. These plans should provide specific procedures for emergency situations related to intruders, fire, tornado, bomb threats, etc.

They should also include information regarding evacuation, notification of police and other appropriate authorities, signals/codes for personnel, a system to contact parents or responsible parties, a system for release of students, provisions for site isolation, methods of communication, both internal and external, first aid, faculty and staff assignments, closing of school and/or early dismissal of students.

The responsibility for determining whether or not the building should be evacuated rests with the principal. In the absence of the principal, the principal's designee should be responsible for carrying out the emergency procedures.

Copies of the procedures are to be distributed to all school personnel and families. All school personnel, including those involved in coaching and before and after school programs should be instructed in these procedures.

B. Emergency Drills

Written standards of procedures for emergency drills (fire, tornado, etc.) should be posted in each classroom, gymnasium, cafeteria, and all other occupied areas of the building. All occupants of the building should be made aware of the emergency procedures as posted, and practices should be scheduled on a regular basis.

Fire extinguishers must be placed in appropriate locations, clearly identified, and checked annually or more frequently if required by local fire regulations.

B. Non-authorized Persons

All preschools and elementary schools should establish procedures to register visitors on campus and monitor non-authorized persons. Persons with no legitimate reason, or written authorization to be on the school grounds should be asked to leave by any school personnel. If the person does not leave, the police should be called.

SCHOOL BUILDINGS

All school buildings and grounds should meet the applicable standards of the Colorado Department of Health, Fire Department and any other applicable state or municipal building code standards. In addition, all school buildings should meet any standards published by the Diocese of Pueblo.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

Grievance procedures are to be spelled out in school handbooks. An appeal concerning any matter relating to Catholic preschools and elementary schools should be dealt with at the local level.

Every attempt should be made to resolve a conflict at the level where the conflict is occurring before proceeding to next level. For schools this is as follows:

- Teacher
- Principal
- Pastor

The Office of Catholic Schools recognizes the local administrations' authority to exercise discretionary rights.

The diocesan superintendent and/or the diocesan human resource person may be contacted for assistance when situations require this person's attention.

HOME SCHOOLING

The diocese recognizes that parents are the primary educators of their children. Some parents choose to live out their role as primary educators by providing educational opportunities at home. When this occurs, the Catholic school is under no obligation and is discouraged from making special classes available to these students. Records for these students may not be kept at the school office.

ENGAGING SPEAKERS

Permission is required for someone outside the diocese to address school staff, students and parents. A speaker request form can be found in **Appendix R** or on the diocesan website: www.dioceseofpueblo.com. Once permission is received from the diocese, final arrangements with the presenter can be made.