

Section 400

Religious Education

“To teach the faith, one must know the faith. To know the faith, one must study the faith.”
Archbishop Chaput

"The religion teacher is the key, the vital component, if the educational goals of the school are to be achieved. But the effectiveness of religious instruction is closely tied to the personal witness given by the teacher; this witness is what brings the content of the lessons to life. Teachers of religion, therefore, must be men and women endowed with many gifts, both natural and supernatural, who are also capable of giving witness to these gifts..." The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, The Congregation for Catholic Education, Rome, 1988, p. 49, # 96.

All teachers in a Catholic school are teachers of the faith by the personal witness of Jesus Christ through their words and actions. As such, they should study and know the beliefs of the Catholic faith. Thus, the central importance of religious education in the Catholic School requires that each teacher be a practicing member of the faith. Teachers should also be well acquainted with authentic Catholic theology. To achieve this aim, every teacher is required to earn 16.0 credits (9 required, 7 electives) in Catholic theology and/or religious education. All Catholic school teachers must complete an Orientation course during the first year of teaching. New teachers should begin immediately the process of earning the required criteria of credits so that this may be accomplished within their first eight years of teaching. Non-Catholic teachers may not teach the subject of Religion.

If a teacher who is employed does not cooperate with the criteria for academic preparation and competency required by the Archdiocesan Catechetical Certification Policy, the Office for Catechetical Formation will not assume responsibility for the quality and authenticity of the religious instruction and formation that is being offered by that teacher.

P/P Archdiocesan Catechetical
Certification Policy

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Refer to the accompanying policy statement.

To assure the continued faith formation and professional religious development of all teachers in the Catholic Schools of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, it is required that these teachers earn 16 credits (9 required Catholic Theology credits, 7 elective credits) within their first eight years of teaching in order to be awarded a formal certificate of completion.

- The Office for Catechetical Formation expects teachers to accrue the required eight core theology courses offered by the Catechetical Institute. Upon review by the Office for Catechetical Formation, credits in theology that have been earned at a Catholic university or college can be applied toward the fulfillment of the core course requirements for certification.
- Elective credits are earned through the successful completion of the requirements associated with a variety of courses, programs, seminars and workshops that are offered through Office for Catechetical Formation.
- Upon review by the Office for Catechetical Formation, credits in theology that have been earned at a Catholic university or college can be applied toward the fulfillment of the core and/or elective course requirements for certification.
- All Catholic School teachers must complete a catechetical orientation course during their first year of teaching. The catechetical orientation is part of the annual Induction.
- All Catholic School teachers must earn at least two credits each year and complete certification within the first eight years of teaching. Compliance with the certification policy is required in order to teach in a Catholic School within the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

Teachers' records of courses and credits (hours) earned should be kept on file in the local school office. *Teachers should be reminded to keep original copies.* Teachers should send a copy of the original to the Office for Catechetical Formation in order to update their Archdiocesan (electronic) course record.

After 16.0 credits have been earned, it is the teacher's responsibility to contact the Office for Catechetical Formation for a review of his/her catechetical record. If all requirements have been fulfilled, an Archdiocesan Catechetical Certification will be issued. A formal certificate is awarded in recognition of the completion of all requirements.

Professional Update

To maintain certification, teachers must earn one credit each year. Verification of this update should be kept on file in the local school or parish office. The credit may be earned through the Catechetical Institute or it may be an elective credit approved by the Office for Catechetical Formation. Updated information is to be sent by the principal to the OCF in June.

P/P Teacher Contract Regarding
Catechetical Certification Policy

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The *Archdiocesan Catechetical Certification Policy* is not optional for any early childhood, elementary, special education, and learning disability teachers. To highlight the importance of the teachers earning the required religion credits, it is strongly recommended that pastors use this contract form. (Refer to Policy No. 403.3)

Parish Letterhead

**Catechetical Certification Policy Requirements
Early Childhood, Elementary, Special Education, Learning Disability Teachers**

To provide for the professional and religious formation of the lay teachers in the early childhood, elementary, special education, and learning disability schools of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia the **NORMS FOR THE ARCHDIOCESAN CATECHETICAL CERTIFICATION POLICY** provide as follows:

Credits for Catechetical Certification must be earned until a total of 16 credits have been accrued. A minimum of two (2) Religion credits a school year must be earned for renewal as a teacher at _____ School. These credits must be obtained between June 15 preceding the opening of the school year and the following June 15. Transcripts of the required credits are to be presented prior to the closing of the school year.

TO THE TEACHER

I have read and understand these requirements. I further understand that my approval to continue teaching at _____ School depends upon my compliance with the above requirements. Failure to comply may result in immediate dismissal or non-renewal of contract.

I shall comply with these requirements.

Signature of Teacher

School

Date

The Principal should appoint a Religion Coordinator annually. The responsibilities of the Religion Coordinator may include the following:

- To inform faculty members of the Catechetical Institute (core) courses (St. Charles Borromeo Seminary) as well as the DVD (core) courses and elective credit opportunities provided by the Office for Catechetical Formation
- To be of assistance to the administrator in the fundamental tasks of catechesis: promoting knowledge of the faith (National Directory for Catechesis, pp. 59-63)
- To meet periodically with the administrator with a view toward evaluating and strengthening the school's Catholic identity and religion program
- To offer assistance in preparing school liturgies
- To promote apostolic action in community service
- To serve as a leader in the area of religious instruction
- To assist the administrator in the process of updating teachers' Catechetical Certification records
- To become knowledgeable concerning assessment, audio-visual resources, and services available from existing agencies
- To cooperate with the administrator in the establishment of a professional library and resource center to provide current material for teacher enrichment.

- To address the faculty on the topic of religious education at faculty meetings with the approval of the administrator. This opportunity can serve as an occasion for preparing liturgies, developing enrichment, discussing curriculum, strengthening awareness on social issues, communicating archdiocesan notices, circulating reading material, etc.
- To plan and conduct religion meetings with the faculty with the approval of the administrator in order to define and implement the goals and objectives of the religion program, to share ideas, to discuss problems, etc.
- To select religion books and supplemental according to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Textbook Conformity List posted at:

<http://www.usccb.org/about/evangelization-and-catechesis/subcommittee-on-catechism/upload/Current-Conformity-List.pdf>
- To encourage efforts toward parent-education with the intention of equipping them as the primary educators of their children in the faith

If the Religion Coordinator is also the parish director/coordinator of religious education (D/CRE), the D/CRE is responsible to the school principal.

“The religious dimension of the school climate is expressed through the celebration of Christian values in Word and Sacrament...”

The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, The Congregation for Catholic Education, p. 13, # 26

“Liturgy planning should be especially careful to bring the school community and the local Church together.” Ibid, p. 14, #30.

Liturgy (the Mass, the celebration of the sacraments, the Liturgy of the Hours, etc.) is one of the most powerful catechetical and formational instruments at the disposal of the Church. Each Catholic school is to provide regular celebration of Mass for its students, as well as periodic opportunities for celebration of the Sacrament of Penance. These times of worship help develop personal sanctity and build a community of faith. It is the presumption of liturgical law that Catholics perform the various ministries (i.e. lector, cantor, etc.) at Mass and sacramental celebrations. Daily prayer and participation in popular devotion are also hallmarks of Catholic education.

The principal is responsible for coordinating with the pastor(s) in coordinating the annual liturgical school calendar and planning school liturgies and prayer services. He/she may delegate the responsibility of liturgical planning to a faculty member (s) who has the appropriate background and training in liturgy.

The parish, under the leadership of the pastor, is the door for the faithful to participate in the ordinary Christian community. Here the Christian faith is first received, expressed and nourished. The Eucharist is at the heart of the parish's life. As the Scriptures are proclaimed and the Creed professed, the truths of the faith shape ever more profoundly the faith of the People of God. Through the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, they come to know the Pascal Mystery more intimately and **experientially**. They receive not simply the knowledge of God, but they come to know the living God. Then, from the parish the faithful are sent on their apostolic mission in the world.

GUIDELINES

In the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, we strongly encourage that First Holy Communion be conducted in a solemn liturgy.

First Penance and First Holy Communion are ordinarily to be received in one's own parish church. Children attending a consolidated school, regional school, a neighboring parish school or religious education program therefore should receive their First Penance and First Holy Communion in their own parish church rather than in the church of a host parish that is providing the school facility for their Catholic education.

When a request comes from the parents or guardians of a child to allow their child to receive First Penance or First Holy Communion at a neighboring parish, the pastor is asked, before making a decision, to take seriously this request, considering any legitimate sensitivities that may exist.

When exceptions exist for the celebration of First Penance and First Holy Communion to take place outside the child's parish church, the following procedures are to be followed:

- 1) The parents or guardians who wish to have their child receive First Penance and First Holy Communion in another parish are to obtain permission from the pastor of their own parish.
- 2) The pastor, in whose parish the Sacraments will be celebrated, must give permission and be in agreement that the child has been adequately prepared for the reception of those Sacraments.
- 3) After the child has received the Sacraments, notification is to be sent to the home parish of the child concerning the reception of these Sacraments.
- 4) It is recommended that, if children attend a neighboring parish school and receive First Holy Communion in the neighboring parish church, the pastor of the

P/P Policy Statement for the Place of
Celebration of First Penance
And First Holy Communion

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children's own parish should designate a Sunday Mass shortly thereafter to acknowledge solemnly their reception of First Holy Communion.

Private Catholic Schools who have had a long-standing tradition of celebrating First Penance and First Holy Communion may continue to follow this practice. However, the above guidelines are to be observed. The location chosen should be an appropriate place which ensures the sacredness of the event.

Ordinarily, individuals are to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation in their own parish church. When a request comes from the parents or guardians of a child to allow their child to receive Confirmation at a neighboring parish, the pastor is asked, before making a decision, to take seriously this request, considering any legitimate sensitivities that may exist.

When exceptions exist, the Sacrament of Confirmation may be administered outside the parish church of the individual receiving the sacrament. In these cases, the following procedures are to be followed:

- 1) The parents or guardians who wish to have their child receive Confirmation in another parish are to obtain permission from the pastor of their own parish.
- 2) The pastor, in whose parish the Sacrament will be celebrated, must give permission and be in agreement that the individual has been adequately prepared for the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation.
- 3) After the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation, notification is to be sent to the home parish.

Approved and promulgated by:

Cardinal Justin Rigali
Archbishop of Philadelphia

Reverend Gerald Measure
Chancellor
Effective Date: August 2009

The content of the Religion curriculum is found in the Religion Guidelines, copyrighted September 1998 for Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten and September 2000 for Grades One through Eight. In 2006 these guidelines were reformatted into trimesters and were updated in 2012 and 2013. The guidelines are available on the Office of Catholic Education website. It is important to remember that no one text contains sufficient development of content; therefore, it is important that the teacher use a variety of resources in preparing religion lessons. "...Catholic schools strive to relate all of the sciences to salvation and sanctification. Students are shown how Jesus illumines all of life—science, mathematics, history, business, biology, and so forth." National Directory for Catechesis, USCCB, 2005, p.233, 9d.

When scheduling the various curriculum subject areas, prime importance is to be given to the daily teaching of the subject of Religion. Class schedules should reflect the important place Religion has in the curriculum.

Every teacher in a Catholic school shares in its catechetical ministry. Through the example of the faculty the school becomes a favorable setting for catechesis with its daily opportunity for proclaiming and living the Gospel message; for learning and appreciating the teachings of our Church; for acquiring a deep understanding, reverence, and love of the Liturgy; for building community; for prayer and proper formation of conscience; and for participation in Christian service.

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The use of Scripture is essential to the teaching of Religion in the Catholic School. In the archdiocesan elementary schools, only Bibles with the *Nihil Obstat* and *Imprimatur* of the Catholic Church may be used by the students.

Supplementary materials and media used in the teaching of Religion should be chosen with the same care as textbooks. They should have a Catholic identity and should be previewed before use by the teacher, religion coordinator and/or administrator. In sensitive areas, these materials should be chosen with the approval of the pastor(s), administrator, and religion coordinator. Permission must be obtained from the parent(s)/guardian(s) for students to view materials dealing with sensitive areas.

P/P Assessment

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End-of-Year religion assessments (objective and performance) are to be used in Grades One through Eight. These assessments are diagnostic in nature and provided by the Archdiocesan Office of Catholic Education.

“Not all students in Catholic schools are members of the Catholic Church; not all are Christians... The religious freedom and the personal conscience of individual students and their families must be respected, and the freedom is explicitly recognized by the Church. On the other hand, a Catholic school cannot relinquish its own freedom to proclaim the Gospel and to offer a formation based on the values to be found in a Christian education; this is its right and duty.”

The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, The Congregation for Catholic Education, p. 5, # 96.

With regard to non-Catholic students, it is to be remembered what is stated in the philosophy of Catholic Education: that all schools within the Archdiocese of Philadelphia are Catholic and the Catholic identity of the school must be the primary focus.

At the time of registration, parent(s)/guardian(s) are to be informed that non-Catholic students are expected to attend all worship/prayer experiences that are part of the total religious education program of the school. Non-Catholic students are also expected to attend, study and actively participate in Religion class. Parent(s)/guardian(s) may not request that the student be removed from Religion class or liturgical functions nor may they remove them from these functions.

However, the religious affiliation of non-Catholic students is to be respected. If a non-Catholic student is not affiliated with a religion, the school administration should invite him/her to attend a Sunday Mass or other Catholic liturgical or prayer services outside the school day. If affiliated with a Church, they are to be exhorted to follow the worship practice of that church.