



Schools Overview

*Train the young in the way they should go; even when old, they will not swerve from it.
- Proverbs 22:6*

While the majority of this handbook applies to both parishes and schools, this section is focused primarily on issues that specifically impact schools.

Overview

Catholic schools represent a significant ministry of the Archdiocese of Seattle and the parishes and communities in which they serve. It is important to assure families considering a Catholic school that there will be no immediate changes in the stability and continuity of the school in the new parish family. In fact, our belief is that Catholic education, and each Catholic school, will be strengthened in its mission with the new parish family structure.

Together we aim to minimize disruptions to Catholic schools as the implementation of parish families begins. The following are special considerations for schools that a pastor, principal and the Parish Family Leadership Team may wish to consider.

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Phase 0 Activities

When parish families are announced, which closely aligns with the timing of tuition contracts for the 2024/25 school year, messaging to existing and prospective parents needs to be in place. The pastor and principal at each parish should ensure consistency and unity in messaging to their communities, though joint messaging within a parish family should wait until the new pastor is announced in the spring.

Principals can coordinate events requiring the presence of a priest with other schools and parishes in the family, reducing conflicts in the school year starting September 2024. It will be helpful to consider which events require the pastor and those for which a parochial vicar can serve, distinguishing between activities such as a Back-to-School Night and the Mass of the Holy Spirit.

Phase 1 Activities

- Either the pastor or the parish staff leader (e.g., PAA, director of operations) needs to ensure the skills and training are in place for processing accounting and payroll for schools, due to its complexity, volume and nuances.
- A pastor and his parochial vicar will want to do a “meet and greet” with school leadership early in Phase 1, particularly with principals and school commissions.
- The pastor and principal will want to assess alignment of the school’s and parish’s operational practices. Operating norms should be established early on, with care for existing practices, striving for consistency (and acknowledging that changing a system does not imply one approach is better or worse than the other).
- Principals will want to coordinate liturgical schedules and community events.
- School commissions should continue to operate independently, looking for opportunities to collaborate. (See Phase 2 activities.) School commissions should think about how to best participate in/coordinate the discernment process of the parish family and the Parish Family Advisory/Leadership Council.
- Pastors with more than one school may want to consider delegating his role on the school commission of one or more of the schools to a parochial vicar.
- Parish families with multiple schools will want to coordinate parish financial support of schools in mid-phase 1 in preparation for the following school year. It is important to begin discerning a consistent philosophy and methodology regarding school funding for the parish family.
- As a starting point for standardization across schools in the parish family, parish finance councils and school commissions should discuss their approaches and philosophies regarding issues such as salaries and tuition. It is important to note that

changes like this will require significant study, input and discernment.

- Encourage inviting other schools in the parish family to each other's school events in the spirit of building community.
- As a general principle, significant changes, such as closing a school or changing the curricular or programmatic framework of a school, should not be implemented in Phase 1.

Phase 2 Activities

Parish families with multiple schools will want to consider evaluating the potential for shared staff and discerning the potential for common salary and tuition scales and structures and calendars.

When considering the potential for shared staff, school and parish leadership will evaluate where there may be opportunities for specialization. For example, many schools will have a development director on staff who is responsible for fundraising, marketing and enrollment. With two development directors in a parish family, one may be more inclined toward event management and fundraising and another may be gifted in the areas of marketing and enrollment.

Or, if one school has a part-time development director and another school has an unfilled part-time development director, the school leadership may determine that these roles could be combined to create one position serving both schools.

Phase 3 Activities

Through the parish family discernment process, there may be consideration of the future of the school or schools in the parish family. Discernment may include school expansion or consolidation. This discernment should include leadership from the Office for Catholic Schools and be undertaken in the context of the policies of the OCS.

School Finances Best Practices

Catholic schools are one of the most significant ministries of the Church. They represent a priority from a pastoral and financial perspective. In addition, the cost of operating a school is substantive and impacts the financial operations of the parish family. As new parish families are formed, they may find themselves in one of the following situations:

1. The new parish family may have two or more schools.
2. The new parish family may have one school combined with a number of parishes that do not have a school.
3. The new family does not have a school, but desires to explore the opportunity of opening one.

Each of these situations presents unique circumstances related to school finances. In all cases, the most important factor for the financial well-being of the parish and school is a strong relationship between the pastor, the principal and the business manager, in addition to a *healthy relationship between the parish finance council(s) and the school commission(s)*.

As parish families are formed, the relationship between the finance council(s) and school commission(s) must stay focused on the mission of Catholic education since it is a key parish ministry and grounded in the economic realities of the parish family. This starts in the first year by sharing philosophies and approaches to tuition, staff salaries and parish support. *Consideration should be given in the first year toward standardizing parish support to schools using one of the methodologies described below. Funding should move toward equity but may not always be equal.*

Parish Family with Two or More Schools

Parish families with two or more schools will need to discuss and discern an approach and timing toward standardization of tuition and salaries. Schools within the same family will likely have different salary scales and tuition rates. Understanding those differences and the financial implications of developing a standard approach for each will be an important conversation between the school commissions and the finance councils. Discernment needs to balance the impact to parents, staff and parish finances. Discernment should be grounded in the financial realities of all the schools and parishes involved. *The process of standardizing salaries and tuition may take more than one year to implement and, in some places, may not be complete within the three-year timeframe. Nevertheless, a plan to discern standardization and timeline for implementation should be developed and communicated with all stakeholders as early in the process as feasible.*

Parish Family with One School

Parish families with one school present a great opportunity for the school and other parishes, particularly if there has not been a relationship in the past. Parish family leadership should find ways to promote the parish school across all parishes and consider any barriers that may exist for full participation, including the need for financial support from other parishes within the family and offering in-parish tuition support to all students within a parish family.

Desire for a School

Parish families without a school that desire a Catholic school should reach out to the superintendent for Catholic schools to learn more about the process for exploring the feasibility of opening a school.

School Funding Methodologies

Our parochial Catholic schools are a ministry of their parish. Parishes should fund their schools systematically so the finances of the school ministry can be planned and projected out for multiple years within the context of the parish budget. The following are methodologies for how parishes fund parochial schools:

- **Flat Percentage:** funds based on a percentage of the prior year's revenue. Most often this is a percentage of offertory income. Less frequently used options are for the parish to support a percentage of total school income or total school expense.
- **Flat Dollar Amount:** parish funds a fixed dollar amount that is changed periodically based on the judgment of parish and school leadership.
- **Per Pupil Amount (Partial Gap Funding):** based on a dollar amount per student. The amount is either based on number of parish students or total number of students. This model results in a lower tuition rate for some or all families and is often calculated by dividing total expenses by the number of students enrolled at the school.
- **Per Pupil Amount (Full Gap Funding):** Some parishes subsidize the cost of tuition for "in-parish families."
- **Deficit Funding:** parish funds the school deficit at year end or funds the budgeted deficit throughout the year.
- **Deficit with Cap Funding:** funds any school deficit at year end to a maximum dollar amount.
- **One Position Funding:** funds salary and benefits for the principal, who is the one position in the school that reports directly to the pastor.
- **Stewardship Model:** funds all the expenses of the school from the sacrificial giving of the parish. No tuition is charged.

[Link to full School Policy Manual](#)

[Link to Procedures for Opening and Affiliating New Schools](#)

[Link to Expanding, Consolidating or Closing a Catholic School](#)

[Link to Implementing a New Curriculum/Program Framework in Schools](#)