

Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph



MISSION STATEMENT:

We are an educational ministry focused on the overall development of the child in a Catholic faith community enabling children and youth to make a positive difference in the world. The entire faith community, especially parents and school staff, support and participate in this development.

VISION STATEMENT:

We envision a dynamic source of value centered, quality education rooted in the Catholic faith which embraces diversity and enriches the communities we serve.

Code of Ethics for the Catholic School and Early Childhood Educator

PREAMBLE:

The whole question of values has been an important topic in educational circles in recent years, in both the public and the private sectors. During this period of much ethical and moral debate, we in Catholic education stand ready with many contributions to make to the Church and to the nation as we share the vision and values which inform and inspire our teaching ministry.

This Code of Ethics for an educator in a Catholic school or early childhood center is a concise guide by which to reexamine those values and renew that vision as it relates to our ongoing commitment to students, parents, community and profession. "To some has been given the gift of teaching . . ." This gift carries with it both great responsibilities and great personal and spiritual rewards. The motivation for having and living a Code of Ethics grows from our desire to be true professionals and not from the need for another evaluation tool. We also recognize our obligation to follow all policies and procedures as outlined in the Administrative Manual of the Diocesan School Office as well as local Handbooks.

PRINCIPLE 1: COMMITMENT TO THE STUDENT

As educators within the Catholic school system, we believe that children and youth, like ourselves, are pilgrim people, making their journey through this life with a constant focus on the next. We have a special responsibility to encourage each to achieve his/her maximum potential. We work to stimulate the spirit of inquiry, the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, and the thoughtful formulation of worthy goals and values. In fulfilling our obligation to the student, we are called to:

- 1) Help children and youth see the values of Jesus as relevant in their daily lives.
- 2) Recognize, respect, and foster the uniqueness and the potential of every child.
- 3) Create and maintain safe and healthy settings that foster children's social, emotional, intellectual, physical and spiritual development and that respect their dignity and their contributions.
- 4) Help students learn to relate human culture and knowledge to the Good News of salvation.
- 5) Show Christian concern about the joys and problems of each student.
- 6) Speak with charity and justice about students even when called upon to discuss sensitive matters.
- 7) Work with students in preparing liturgies, paraliturgies and other religious programs.
- 8) Except where applicable law may require reporting, respect confidential information concerning students and

- their homes.
- 9) Plan appropriate service projects for children and youth that will develop their sense of responsibility to the community as well as challenge them to do acts of justice in order to build the Kingdom of God.
 - 10) Enable children and youth to grow in a sense of self-worth and accountability by selecting activities which promote a positive self-concept as becomes maturing Christians.
 - 11) Develop the students' knowledge and understanding of the subject(s) for which we are responsible, without suppression or distortion.
 - 12) Refuse remuneration for tutoring students assigned to our classes during the regular school year and reject any other use of our students for personal financial gain unless approved by the Principal, Director or Superintendent.
 - 13) Consistently use teaching methods that are based on current best knowledge and research.
 - 14) Model Christian virtues and Christian behavior toward everyone.

PRINCIPLE II: COMMITMENT TO PARENTS

As educators within the Catholic schools and early childhood centers, we believe children are influenced by home, community and a society in which attitudes toward Christian values are often challenged. Parents, the source from whom children and youth derive their values, entrust their children to the Catholic school or early childhood center to instruct, complement and intensify the education and formation begun in the home. We are called to assist these parents in fulfilling their obligation for the Christian formation and education of their child. Therefore, we will:

- 1) Respect parents' fundamental human right to know, to understand and to share in decisions that affect the education of their child by:
 - Developing relationships of mutual trust with the families we serve.
 - Assisting families in teaching and passing on the Catholic faith and participating in the parish.
 - Acknowledging and building upon strengths and competencies as we support families in their task of nurturing their children.
 - Respecting the dignity of each family and its culture, customs, and beliefs.
 - Respecting parents' child-rearing values and their right to make decisions for their children.
 - Assuring parents of our commitment to ongoing education as professional educators and informing them of educational qualifications.
 - Keeping parents apprised of the curriculum and method of instruction.
 - Providing opportunities for parents to help shape classroom and school policies and keeping them well informed regarding all current policies.
- 2) Develop educational programs and activities to enhance family life as well as the home-school relationship.
- 3) Except where applicable law may require reporting, respect any confidential information which parents share.
- 4) Report to parents their child's progress regularly and as needed, in a spirit of charity, with professional accuracy and honesty.

PRINCIPLE III: COMMITMENT TO THE COMMUNITY

As educators within the Catholic schools and early childhood centers, we believe the school and early childhood community is both an agent of appropriate change and a preserver of basic tradition. We consider the school community an integral part of the parish whose people it serves, and a vital force for preparing future civic and Church leaders. In fulfilling our obligation to our apostolic profession, we are called to:

- 1) Promote the peace of Christ in the world by:
 - Modeling peaceful solutions to community conflicts.
 - Encouraging a spirit of cooperation and avoiding the extremes in competition.
 - Developing skills which will enable children and youth to interact with society for a better world.
 - Supporting policies and laws that promote the well-being of children and youth and families, opposing those that impair their well-being, cooperating with other individuals and groups in these efforts.
- 2) Cooperate wholeheartedly in the continued building of parish life and spirit by:
 - Emphasizing the integral nature of the Catholic school and early childhood center within the parish and community.
 - Assisting communication concerning parish resources, needs and events.
 - Modeling active participation in our own parish or church community.
- 3) Develop student potential for constructive Christian leadership within the American democracy by:
 - Ensuring an adequate understanding of history and its lessons.
 - Providing opportunities for taking responsible moral positions on current issues.
 - Offering instruction and practice in leadership skills.
- 4) Contribute to the well-being of the area in which the school is located by:
 - Reflecting the philosophy of the school in our attitudes and actions.
 - Manifesting respect and appreciation for the work of educators in other schools and systems.
 - Encouraging in students a respect for the person and property of their neighbors.

- Avoiding inappropriate school activities that disturb the peace and order of the community.

PRINCIPLE IV: COMMITMENT TO THE PROFESSION

As educators within the Catholic schools and early childhood centers, we believe that professional excellence in Catholic schools and early childhood centers directly influences our Church, country and world. We strive to create a Christian environment which promotes sound moral and professional judgment. Through our spirit of joy, enthusiasm and zest for life-long learning, we encourage others to join us in our ministry of teaching in a Catholic school or early childhood center.

In fulfilling our responsibilities as professional educators, we are called to:

- 1) Maintain professional standards by:
 - Establishing and maintaining relationships of trust and cooperation with co-workers.
 - Preserving the reputations of colleagues, administrators and those we serve.
 - Safeguarding the exchange of confidential information.
 - Refusing to use the classroom to further personal ends through the sale of any goods, products or publications.
 - Refraining from using the school as a platform for one's own beliefs which are not in accord with the school philosophy or Church teaching.
 - Overseeing the duties of nonprofessionals under our direction, making sure they assume only those responsibilities appropriate to their role.
 - Maintaining a professional demeanor at all meetings and staff development gatherings.
 - Assisting in the orientation of educators new to a position and/or school.
 - Maintaining and promoting a positive attitude and team spirit among the staff.
 - Considering the obligations of the teaching contract as binding in a most serious manner, and conscientiously fulfilling the contract.
 - Terminating unexpired contracts only because of serious reasons, with the consent of both parties and after sufficient notice.
 - Upholding the authority of the school and staying loyal to the school and diocese when communicating with parents, students and civic community.
 - Presenting honest, accurate professional qualifications of self and colleagues when required for professional reasons.
 - Presenting a professional appearance in the classroom and at appropriate school functions.
 - Sharing resources and information with co-workers.
 - According co-workers due recognition of professional achievements.
- 2) Seek and encourage persons who live a life consonant with Gospel values and Catholic Church teachings to pursue the ministry of teaching by:
 - Modeling a mature faith life and witnessing to the faith community on the parish, diocesan, national and world levels.
 - Exemplifying the teachings of Jesus Christ by dealing with children and adults in true love and justice.
 - Exhibiting knowledge of the Church documents, especially "To Teach as Jesus Did," "Sharing the Light of Faith," "The Catholic School," and current statements from the Catholic bishops.
- 3) Keep abreast of what is happening in education. Read professionally, take advantage of staff development opportunities offered, seek assistance in areas that need improvement or that represent school or center goals.

PRINCIPAL V: Code of Conduct for Catholic School and Early Childhood Educators and Staff Members

Our children are the most important gifts God has entrusted to us. As an educator or staff member in a Catholic school or early childhood center, I promise to strictly follow the rules and guidelines in this Code of Conduct:

I WILL:

- Treat everyone with respect, loyalty, patience, integrity, courtesy, dignity and consideration.
- Avoid situations where I am alone with children and/or youth. If there is no other adult present, I will always interact in an area where I can be viewed by others as I work with children or youth. If I ever need to drive a young person home a night, I will have another adult go with me or I will try to arrange for the parent(s) to come after him or her
- Arrange meeting space so that I am a comfortable distance from any child or youth with whom I am working or interacting.
- Use positive reinforcement rather than criticism, sarcasm, harassment, competition, or comparison when working with children and/or youth.
- Follow our diocesan policy on sexual harassment with regards to children, youth or adults.
- Refuse to accept expensive gifts from children and/or youth or their parents without approval from the administrator.
- Refrain from giving expensive gifts to children and/or youth without approval from the administrator.
- Immediately report suspected abuse to the principal or director and the Missouri Division of Family Services (1.800.392.3738). I understand that failure to report suspected abuse to civil authorities is, according to the law, a misdemeanor. The Diocesan School Office is notified by the principal or director.
- Be aware that young people can easily become infatuated with a caring adult. If I sense that this is happening, I will not encourage it. I will make my administrator aware of it and find ways to give the young person appropriate support and maintain appropriate boundaries.
- Take care in my speaking, writing, and actions to be professional but supportive and caring.
- Follow all policies and procedures regarding field trips i.e. notification of parents, permission forms, number of chaperones needed, drivers, etc.
- Avoid being the only adult in a bathroom, shower room, locker room or other dressing areas whenever minors are using such facilities. If I need to monitor the area or deal with discipline I will take care to leave the door ajar or to call for another teacher or volunteer to assist.
- Use a team approach in handling emergency situations.

I WILL NOT:

- Smoke or use tobacco products in the presence of the children and/or youth.
- Serve or supply alcohol or any controlled substance to minors.
- Use, serve, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol at any time while fulfilling my obligations as a professional educator or volunteer.
- Use, possess, or be under the influence of illegal drugs at any time.
- Pose any health risk to children and/or youth (i.e. no fevers or other contagious situations). Strike, spank, shake, or slap any child or youth.
- Humiliate, ridicule, threaten, or degrade any child or youth.
- Touch a child or youth in a sexual or other inappropriate manner that might be misconstrued by the child, the youth or others
- Use any discipline that frightens or humiliates a child or youth.
- Use profanity or vulgar humor in the presence of a child or youth.
- Make comments of a sexual nature except in response to specific classroom or otherwise legitimate questions from a minor.
- Place myself in a situation where my interaction with a minor cannot be witnessed.
- Go on vacation or overnights with any minor other than my own child(ren). I will never share a bed with a minor. Nor will I share a room with children or youth unless another adult is present. In rare, emergency situations, when accommodation is necessary for the health and well-being of the youth, I will take extraordinary care to protect all parties from the appearance of impropriety and from all risk of harm.
- Bring onto school or center premises or have on my person at any time children/youth are present illegal substances, pornographic material, or weapons of any sort..