



# **SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL PRIMER**



Department of Catholic Schools  
Archdiocese of Portland in Oregon

# **A MEMBER'S PRAYER**

**I have been asked to serve, Lord, and I have agreed.**

**Help me to know my fellow members:  
their gifts, their concerns, their lives.**

**I am doing your work, Lord,  
and Your love for me and for this, above all,  
is personal.**

**Help me to welcome differences of opinion  
as a sign of the diversity on this council,  
as an opportunity to reach for creative solutions.**

**Help me to recognize this diversity  
as a sign of your capacity to love us all  
and help me to cherish it as a great strength.**

**Help me to approach issues with an open, inquiring mind,  
free from prejudice, with my spirit depending on Yours  
for the strength to make hard decisions.**

**Help me to listen;  
to know when and to whom I should listen.**

**Help me to learn to use my own gifts  
to promote thorough, thoughtful discussion  
of important concerns in our Catholic community.**

**Help me to develop my skills as a peacemaker,  
to know how and when to mediate,  
to concillate, to negotiate.**

**Help me to enjoy doing your work  
and to remember Your promise:**

**Whenever two of us are gathered in your Name,  
You are with us.  
Be with us now. AMEN.**



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## **THE ROLE, PURPOSE, AND FUNCTION OF A PARISH OR LOCAL SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL**

### **The Role, Purpose, and Function of a Parish or Local School Advisory Council**

A Catholic School Advisory Council is a body whose members are selected and/or elected to participate in decision-making in designated areas of responsibility. A parish school is part of the educational mission of the parish for which the pastor is the canonical administrator. He delegates, according to archdiocesan policy, administrative responsibilities to the school principal, who is accountable to him.

In the Archdiocese, all local School Advisory Councils are advisory in nature. An Advisory Council operates in the policy-making process by formulating and adopting, but never enacting policy. This type of Advisory Council is in keeping with shared decision-making in the Catholic Church because of the advisory status of the archdiocesan presbyteral council and the archdiocesan finance council. The constituting authority (i.e., Pastor) establishes those areas where the Advisory Council is to be consulted. Such action is usually made effective by the Advisory Council's constitution.

Advisory implies that the pastor will listen to the advice of the Advisory Council in certain designated matters prior to a decision being made. The operating principle is that the pastor will accept the advice which has been given, especially when there is a consensus, unless the pastor has an overriding reason. It is customary, but not obligatory, for the pastor to communicate this reason to the advisory body.

The umbrella role of a Catholic School Advisory Council is to provide policy direction to the school. This very general responsibility resolves into eight distinct functions:

#### **I. ASSURE MISSION EFFECTIVENESS**

The mission of Catholic schools is an expression of the Church's mission of salvation and an instrument of evangelization. As a faith community, students, parents, and educators, in unity with the Church, give witness to Christ's loving communion in the Holy Trinity.

With this Christian vision, Catholic education fulfills its purpose of transmitting culture in the light of faith, integrally forming the human person by developing each student's physical, moral, spiritual and intellectual gifts, teaching responsibility and right use of freedom, preparing students to fulfill God's calling in this world, and attaining the eternal kingdom for which they were created. Through education the Church seeks to prepare its members to proclaim the Good News and to translate this proclamation into action

#### **II. TO PARTICIPATE IN AND ENCOURAGE STRATEGIC PLANNING**

*Establishing goals and objectives, for long-range and short-range plans.*

Establishing goals and objectives for its internal operations will enable the Advisory Council to deal effectively and realistically with its work during the course of the school year. These goals and objectives will provide a basis for the advisory council's self-evaluation.

In formulating a long-range plan, the Advisory Council has the opportunity to gather the information and then to work with the pastor and principal to develop the ideal picture of what things should look like at the end of the plan.

### **III. TO DEVELOP AND DEFEND POLICY**

*Formulating policies in accord with Archdiocesan policies which give general direction for administrative action.*

A policy by definition is a guide to discretionary action. It is a written expression of the Advisory Council's intention regarding some aspect of educational organization or operation. The Executive Officer, the principal, is the person who implements the policy.

### **IV. TO OFFER FINANCIAL ADVICE**

*Developing plans/means to finance the educational programs including tuition, development and fundraising, allocating resources according to a budget and monitoring these plans.*

It is the principal's task, in conjunction with the school finance committee, to prepare the expenditure side of the budget, using as many resource people at the parish level as necessary, especially the parish finance council. The principal, however, should not bear the financial responsibility for the school alone.

#### **It is the Advisory Council's task:**

- to analyze and discuss the proposed budget;
- to present it to the parish finance council and to the pastor for his approval;
- to adopt it, subject to its being balanced by necessary income;
- to identify funding sources and amounts needed from tuition, fundraising, parish investment, development efforts, etc.;
- to request that the principal trim the budget where it will be least harmful to the program(s) if funding is insufficient.

### **V. TO SERVE AS A GOOD PUBLIC RELATIONS SOURCE**

*Communicating with various publics on behalf of the school.*

This includes listening to people's needs and concerns, recruiting students and promoting the education program as well as making efforts in political advocacy.

### **VI. TO EVALUATE ITSELF PERIODICALLY**

Determining its own effectiveness in light of its mission and its responsibilities as outlined by Archdiocesan policy and by its own by-laws.

The Advisory Council's productivity is based on the goals and objectives which give the Advisory Council specific direction each year. The Advisory Council's internal operations are based on how the Advisory Council spends its time and how members operate within their bylaws. To enable a professional evaluation of the principal according to Archdiocesan policy and practice and to participate in that evaluation.

## **VII. TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SELECTION PROCESS OF THE PRINCIPAL, WHO IS THE ADVISORY COUNCIL'S EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

The pastor will invite Advisory Council members to participate in the search committee when a principal needs to be hired according to Archdiocesan policy and practice.

The Catholic Schools Office will assist parishes in their search by facilitating the process. In a prayerful context, the search committee makes its consensus recommendation to the pastor.

Upon the approval of the Archbishop and with the recommendation of the Superintendent of Catholic Schools, the pastor hires the principal who will do the best possible job in the local setting.

## **VIII. One Additional Advisory Council Role: Generativity**

It is the responsibility of the Advisory Council in collaboration with the pastor and the principal to assess and define membership needs and then to recruit and recommend individuals for appointment to the council by the pastor that meet those needs. In collaboration with the pastor and the principal, the council also needs to orient new members to the school's mission, programs, services, goals, and aspirations as well as issues and opportunities.

## **ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP**

### **Eligibility Requirements:**

Ordinarily, School Advisory Councils should have between 10 and 15 appointed members serving three-year terms, plus the Pastor and Principal as ex officio members. In determining membership eligibility, the following issues should be among those considered:

- supporting member of the parish/parent of a child attending the school;
- twenty-one years of age or older;
- genuine interest in Catholic school education;
- ability to work effectively with others;
- willingness to maintain high levels of integrity and confidentiality;
- willingness to support archdiocesan/parish/school philosophy and mission;
- be a credible witness of the Catholic faith to the school and beyond;
- not a salaried employee of the particular parish or school;
- not an immediate relative of a salaried employee as determined by the pastor.

### **Membership Qualifications:**

Individuals being considered for School Advisory Council membership should have identifiable skills or expertise (e.g., legal, financial, public relations, etc.) to present themselves as candidates for Advisory Council membership. The contribution such people make benefits the entire parish/school community. When certain areas of expertise are not possessed by Advisory Council members, efforts should be made to recruit such people to serve on ad hoc committees of the council.

The following are examples of desirable qualifications for those who would serve on Catholic school Advisory Council:

- a willingness to find the time to serve conscientiously;
- ability to be objective and free of personal self-interest;
- ability to influence public opinion favorably in areas of importance to the school;
- a willingness to learn while serving as an Advisory Council member;
- a demonstrated competence in his/her chosen field;
- a willingness to support Advisory Council decisions even if s/he does not fully agree;
- a willingness to accept working within the framework of an Advisory Council .

## **ADVISORY COUNCIL RELATIONSHIPS**

### **The Pastor as Advisory Council Member**

The pastor's role on the local school Advisory Council is clear and cogent in Canon Law. Since the great percentage of Catholic schools in our nation are parish based, they, like other agencies and programs of the parish, are more directly the responsibility of the local pastor. Therefore, the "authority" of the Council derives from its by-laws approved by the archbishop/pastor. This responsibility of the pastor/canonical administrator derives from his office and appointment by the archbishop. This responsibility cannot be abdicated particularly in the areas of Catholic doctrine and policy, financial matters, and hiring and firing policies. In effect, the pastor is the council's pastoral leader but he is especially its spiritual leader.

The pastor, as spiritual leader, shares his pastoral vision and offers other spiritual insights that will enrich and improve the quality of the advisory board's/council's policy making. His most important contribution will more than likely be in the area of religious education, worship and sacramental preparation. As pastoral manager, the pastor furnishes to the Advisory Council vital information about income, expenditures, etc., which only he possesses. As a full member of the Advisory Council, the pastor is aware that all local policies must be ratified by him before they can be implemented and, therefore, shares in policy discussion, sharing his insights, expertise and recommendations.

The pastor's leadership is a dynamic force in the creation and growth of the Christian educational community. One important fact to emphasize with regard to the pastor-Advisory Council relationship is that pastors need not bear the burden of decision-making alone. Lay people are willing and able to use their talents and gifts in participating in the educational ministry of the Church.

### **The Principal and the Advisory Council**

The principal is the educational leader and an executive officer of the Advisory Council. As such, s/he provides educational direction to the Advisory Council. S/he is the link between the Advisory Council and the school with its faculty, students and parents, as well as the inspiring force which helps the Advisory Council to lift itself above budget and finances and see its role in the mission of the Church.

The agenda for Advisory Council meetings is a way in which the principal can provide solid training and guidance for the Advisory Council, by helping to see that it is drawn up with care and that it distinguishes carefully between the various types of agenda items that can be included. It is crucial that the principal phrase recommendations carefully so that all can tell the difference among items that are meant to be information, discussion, advice or action.

The principal keeps the Advisory Council informed about the operation of the school and about archdiocesan processes and procedures. S/he prepares and submits policy recommendations and is responsible for policy implementation after ratification by the pastor.

### **Expectations; the Chairperson and the Advisory Council**

The Chairperson of the school Advisory Council plays an integral role of leadership. He/she is expected to work with the pastor, principal, and Council members in a relationship and process that is supportive and goal-oriented.

The chairperson should see his/her role as a facilitator who helps the Council organize itself to serve the needs of the school community. The Council chairperson never sets himself/herself up (or by the expectation of others) as a “power broker” who vies for authority which is not properly his/hers to possess. Therefore, the Council chairperson must be a person who has effective leadership qualities in directing the work of the Council in collaboration with the whole parish community, particularly the pastor and the principal.

### **Expectations; Principal from Advisory Council and Advisory Council from Principal**

An Advisory Council should expect much from its principal, should see the principal as the educational expert and should utilize that expertise to the maximum extent possible for the good of all segments of the school community. By the same token, however, the principal as a professional has a right to expect much from the Advisory Council. Each should have a complete understanding of what the other’s expectations are.

**A Principal should be able to Assume the Advisory Council will:**

Acknowledge that the school is a significant expression of the teaching vision of the Church and functions within its structure;

Model a faith community in the spirit of interdependence with the pastor and principal;

Act in an ethical and responsible manner, and at all times observe confidentiality;

Acknowledge the administration of the school to be the principal's responsibility and support him/her in his/her efforts;

Furnish objective counsel and advice;

Have an established set of policies to guide the Principal in performing his/her role;

Give honest feedback on the principal's policy implementation on a regular basis;

Adhere to Archdiocesan policy and develop local policies which will enable the school to reach its goals;

Follow agendas or expected procedure in Advisory Council meetings so the principal can be adequately prepared to respond to questions, issues, etc.;

Be fully and carefully prepared for each meeting by doing the required readings and completing necessary tasks for committee work and reports;

Be loyal to Advisory Council decisions even though personally opposed to the final recommendations and decisions;

Review and update the local bylaws when necessary, and as approved by the pastor;

Collaborate in the school's five-year planning endeavors;

Pray often for other members of the Advisory Council, their Catholic school and the community it serves.

**An Advisory Council should be able to Assume that the Principal as an Executive Officer will:**

Prepare the Advisory Council meeting agenda in collaboration with the pastor and the chair, in a businesslike manner to keep meetings to a reasonable length;

Treat all Advisory Council members alike and not show preference to individual members;

Strictly enforce or implement the policies set by the Advisory Council and ratified by the pastor as well as all archdiocesan policies;

Keep the membership informed on Advisory Council matters;

Avoid unexpected issues, topics and areas of action at Advisory Council meetings, so the Advisory Council can have adequate time to respond after being fully advised of all the facts;

Support Advisory Council recommendations;

Keep the Advisory Council advised of changes, innovations and trends in education that might be applicable to the school;

When appropriate, keep the Advisory Council informed of serious or potentially serious issues;

Operate the school in a fiscally sound and responsible manner;

Provide leadership in the implementation of the school's five year plan.

### **The Advisory Council and the Community**

The local school Advisory Council is in a unique position in relation to the school. It not only knows the school—its goals, programs, strengths, weaknesses, successes, failures, dreams and struggles, but it also knows and is part of the thinking and questioning of the laity who are called upon to support the school. This places the school Advisory Council in a unique position to “sell” the school, to be the public relations arm of the school, to market the product of Catholic education.

One of the standing committees, then, of every local school Advisory Council should be a public relations committee.

It would be the task of this committee to publicize both the workings of the Advisory Council and the programs of the school. Working with the principal, the public relations committee would make maximum use of all media resources available. Within the parish itself, the Sunday Bulletin is a resource that should be used. In addition, the local Advisory Council might choose to publish its own newsletter. Local newspapers, also, are often effective sources of publicity.

The specific task for a school public relations committee would include these responsibilities:

- maintaining continuous communications with parish organizations and the total parish community;

- stimulating public interest in the school;

- producing written materials for dissemination to news media, governmental bodies and local groups;

- producing audio-visual materials to tell the school story;

- justifying the need for greater financial support for the school;

- promoting such legislation that will benefit the school by active involvement in making contact with local and state legislators.

## **ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETINGS**

### **Number of Meetings**

The Advisory Council should ordinarily have four regular meetings during the course of a school year. Special meetings can be added, if needed.

### **Purpose of Meetings**

The parish places its Catholic school educational aspirations in the hands of the Advisory Council and, in so doing, gives the Advisory Council the opportunity to shape the school's future. The Advisory Council in its meetings concentrates on its basic functions which are:

- to implement at the local level the objectives and policies of the Archdiocese;
- to perform officially the specific actions required of the local Advisory Council by its by-laws;
- to make policies affecting the local situation that will guide the principal and staff;
- to monitor the principal's implementation of Advisory Council policies;
- to evaluate the effect of the advisory board's/council's policies on the total educational program.

### **Preparing the Agenda**

Developing the agenda is the most important part of the preparation process, since the agenda identifies the issues to be dealt with at the meeting and provides for orderly discussion.

The task of preparing the agenda ordinarily belongs to the Principal, either in conjunction with or following consultation with the Advisory Council, pastor, and chairperson. The process should, of course, include an orderly way for Advisory Council members or others to submit agenda suggestions, for inappropriate items to be disallowed, etc.

Agenda and other written materials that will assist them; such as committee reports, should be mailed sufficiently in advance of a meeting to allow Advisory Council members to come prepared. Materials should be in the hands of the members ten days before a meeting. A productive meeting within a specified time framework of perhaps one and a half to two hours will result.

Advisory Council members should come to a meeting informed so they can discuss to decide. The primary focus of a meeting ordinarily should not be to inform.

### **Suggestions for a Fast-paced and Productive Meeting**

There are things an Advisory Council can do to speed up its meetings, and, what is more important, to see that it talks about something worthwhile during its sessions. If an Advisory Council will take the following suggestions, its meetings will be shorter, its members will be happier, its decisions will be better and its school will probably be improved:

- Start on time. Set ending time, generally no longer than two hours;
- Never discuss any subject which is not on the printed agenda;
- Do not listen to written material read aloud. This includes minutes, correspondence, reports, etc. Have all of it mailed in advance;
- Have the Principal, as an Executive Officer of the Advisory Council, edit the minutes prior to

sending them out. The Pastor should sign off;

Abandon the traditional agenda format and substitute one in which all action items are separated from all the information items\*;

Establish the dates, time and place for the year's meetings at a minimum of six months in advance.

Close the meeting crisply and on a positive note.

### **Executive Session**

Should an issue arise which requires greater confidentiality, an executive session should be held. Only appointed and *ex officio* board members may be present.

### **Agenda Packet**

In order for Advisory Council members to make sound decisions during the meetings, it is desirable to furnish them with background materials on each agenda item in advance of the meeting. This enables members to study the material at their leisure, call the principal for more information, if needed, in advance of the meeting and be prepared to vote at the meeting with a minimum of discussion necessary.

Enclosures may be prepared by the principal or by Advisory Council members who have information on agenda items. The agenda packet, which is sent by the principal, should include:

The minutes of the last meeting;

The agenda;

Committee reports with action items noted;

Financial report;

Part of principal's report;

Background materials for proposals or other agenda items.

### **Effective Council Committees**

A strong committee structure is a characteristic of successful school governance bodies. Committees are an efficient way to handle the great variety of responsibilities of the governance body. Given the scope of the task, it is a method of working effectively. A small group can handle issues in depth, get in depth knowledge, and get specialized information. A governance body needs to process all the work that comes before it. But not everyone has to deal in every issue at the same depth. The role of committees is to process all work of the board, to examine issues in its competence in depth, and then to review and recommend policies and actions in its area of competence to the entire body for discussion and decision. A committee is a small group that can process items and bring options to the full council for consideration. This method of processing the work of a council is one of the most important elements of quality decision making. Without an appropriate committee structure, it is very difficult for the council to properly carry out its decision-making and oversight role.

### **Common Standing Committees**

- A finance committee
- A building and grounds committee
- A resource development/public relations committee,
- And a Catholic identity committee
- executive,
- nominating & board development,
- strategic planning
- finance.

## **SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL**

### **REASONS FOR A SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL**

1. To promote participation in the ministry of Catholic education.
2. To develop ownership and stability for the future.
3. To offer financial advice.
4. To develop and defend policy.
5. To serve as a good public relations source.
6. To enable the Principal to spend adequate time as an educational leader.
7. To provide parents/guardians with a voice in their children's education.
8. To encourage strategic planning.

### **AREAS OF COUNCIL RESPONSIBILITY**

1. Mission effectiveness
2. Planning.
3. Policy formulation.
4. Finances.
5. Participation in Principal Search Committee.
6. Development, including public relations and marketing.
7. Evaluation of school advisory council goals.
8. Generativity; perpetuating itself.

### **WHAT A COUNCIL DOES NOT DO**

1. Discipline.
2. Develop school programs.
3. Approve materials.
4. Hire or terminate staff.

5. Tell the principal how to do things.
6. Act as a grievance board.
7. Send out questionnaires without authorization.
8. Regulatory or administrative actions.

## WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE

Public School Board(s)	School Advisory Council(s) for Catholic Schools
Hires administrator.	May be asked to serve on Search Committee to recommend an administrative candidate to pastor; pastor is the hiring agent.
Evaluates the Administrator.	May be asked for opinion regarding administrator; pastor is the evaluator.
Enacts policy for system.	May recommend policy to the pastor; pastor promulgates policy. Is responsible for supporting the established policy.
Makes regulations regarding the running of school.	May be asked for opinions and advice; the administrator makes regulations with the pastor's approval. Is responsible for supporting the principal's implementation.
Has the final word with respect to decisions regarding the school.	The pastor has the final word on the decisions affecting the school. Is responsible for advising about and supporting the decisions made by the proper authorities.

## **THE GOOD COUNCIL MEMBER**

Councils are only as effective and productive as the people who serve on them. Labeling some members as good and others as bad is common; seldom, however, does one hear of a clear definition of what constitutes a “good” Council member. As a starter, the following guidelines are offered:

### **A GOOD COUNCIL MEMBER...**

is technically a council member only when the school council is in session. No one person, unless authorized, should presume to speak on behalf of the Council.

avoids decisions which are administrative in nature, recognizing them to be the responsibility of the principal.

is well acquainted with archdiocesan and local school policies.

votes at all times for what is in the best interest of the students.

is flexible and realizes that there are times when changes must be made, when tradition cannot be honored, and when pressure must be ignored.

remembers that council business requires confidentiality.

is interested in obtaining facts, but remembers also that the principal has the responsibility of operating the school rather than having to spend full time making reports to the council or to individual members.

knows that the reputation of the entire school is reflected in his/her behavior and attitude.

is a good listener at council meetings, on the street corner, in the church, but never commits himself/herself, the council, or the Principal.

insists that all policies be set forth in writing and that they be periodically evaluated.

is able to separate fact from fiction, rumor from reality.

supports the principal in his/her administration of the school.

understands the need for team work among council, principal and pastor and, as a result, supports decisions when they are made.

## **MOST DIFFICULT THINGS FOR SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS TO LEARN**

Experienced school advisory council members from across the nation were asked to identify the most difficult lesson or fact they had to learn about council service.

### **Here's what they said most often:**

Determining what your function is on the council and how to accomplish it effectively.

That no matter what you think you know about council service when you first come on council, you still have a lot to learn.

Learning to acknowledge publicly that you have no power and authority as an individual advisory Council member; that only the council as a whole can function.

Recognizing the difference between formulating policy (the council's job) and administering the school (the principal's job).

That you must represent all the parents/students. Your decision must be made in the interest of the total school and not made solely for special groups or interests.

Learning how to respond to the complaints and concerns of parents, school administrators and other staff.

That change comes slowly.

That you can't solve everyone's problems by yourself.

That you must think deeply and sometimes accept a reality that is contrary to your own beliefs.

That effective council membership means being able to hold the minority viewpoint when voting on a given issue; then openly supporting the majority vote or consensus position in your community.

Discovering how the school is funded.

## **ETHICS FOR SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS**

1. Give the time, thought, and study necessary to get the job done right—Do your homework!
2. Seek adequate data—A few opinions are not enough for a serious discussion.
3. Uphold final decision of the council even if your opinion had differed.
4. Function in harmony and cooperation.
5. No individual member speaks for the group—no one has legal authority.

6. Keep confidential matters confidential. If council sessions are open, not much is classified as “confidential information.” Executive sessions are exclusive and by their nature confidential.
7. Work always for the welfare of the students in the school—have no personal “ax to grind.”
8. Be constantly aware that you are working in an advisory capacity for the betterment of the school.
9. Stick to your proper function.
10. Sell the school—good public relations is always needed. Seek positive input!

### **SOME THINGS POLICY CAN DO**

1. Give general direction to the administration. (However, the council must be careful not to tie the hands of the principal with a collection of detailed demands and restrictions; it is the principal’s job to run the school.)
2. Anticipate and forestall crises. (While policy cannot prevent a lawsuit, it can guide the principal to take reasonable precautions and reduce the possibility that rash judgment or negligence will rule the crisis situation.)
3. Clarify expectations for students, parents, teachers and others – policy lets people know where the school stands and “what happens if...” they choose to disregard that position. Those associated with school have a right and a duty to know what the school expects of them.
4. Codify and preserve the councils’ decision – policies should not be a well-kept secret, nor should council members have to sift through piles of old minutes in order to trace the decision of their predecessors. Once enacted, new policies should be promulgated, numbered and placed in a folder or manual of school policies; on the school’s website, the only official site of the school’s policies.

### **SOME THINGS POLICY CAN’T DO**

1. Control or supervise administration – the council should be able to trust the principal to implement policy and manage the day-to-day operations of the school. The principal is the school’s professional leader-that is the job he/she has been hired to do. If, after unsuccessful attempts to resolve differences, the council cannot put faith in the administrator, then the council’s/board’s responsibility is to give feedback to the school pastor, not to try to administer the school.
2. Resolve specific problems after the fact – policies cannot be made to work retroactively. People cannot be held responsible for rules enacted after the fact.
3. Address isolated cases or petty items – to create a policy for the exceptional case is a mistake. It creates misunderstanding regarding the school’s “norms,” it can cause bad will and poor public relations; it can backfire on a council/board by legitimizing (even glorifying) actions that are unacceptable or petty. Individual cases should be addressed individually by the administrator.

4. Substitute for programs – policies, by their nature give general direction. They cannot educate.

### **AREAS WHICH NEED POLICIES:**

If the school is part of a diocesan school system, many topics may be covered by policy which supersedes that of the local school council/board. In those cases, the local school council/board is usually free to make the policy more specific to local circumstances as long as the resulting statement does not conflict with that of diocesan policy. The following list contains topics which sometimes become substance for local school policies:

- Strategic planning
- Advancement of the school in the community
- Ongoing financial operations of the school
- Enhancing the school's financial resources and endowments
- Ensuring the Catholicity of the school

### **GOOD POLICIES:**

Good policies achieve their purpose if they:

- Respond to or anticipate educational needs of the community
- Are clear enough to give guidance, broad enough to give space
- Are stated in language that is clear, simple, non-technical
- Are communicated to all, but especially to those affected
- Are written down
- Are systematically indexed and placed in loose-leaf manual
- Are regularly evaluated

## **WHAT IS A CONFLICT OF INTEREST?**

Conflict of interest is difficult to define, yet many people think they know it when they see it. The legal definition of conflict of interest, usually set out in state laws governing nonprofit corporations, is very specific and covers relatively few situations. Most conflicts fall into a gray area where ethics and public perception are more relevant than statutes or precedents.

Conflict of interest arises whenever the personal or professional interests of a board member are potentially at odds with the best interests of the nonprofit. Such conflicts are common: A board member performs professional services for an organization, or proposes that a relative or friend be considered for a staff position. Such transactions are perfectly acceptable if they benefit the organization and if the board made the decisions in an objective and informed manner. Even if

they do not meet these standards, such transactions are usually not illegal. They are, however, vulnerable to legal challenges and public misunderstanding.

Loss of public confidence and a damaged reputation are the most likely results of a poorly managed conflict of interest. Because public confidence is important to most nonprofits, boards should take steps to avoid even the appearance of impropriety. These steps may include:

Adopting a conflict-of-interest policy that prohibits or limits business transactions with board members and requires board members to disclose potential conflicts.

Disclosing conflicts when they occur so that board members who are voting on a decision are aware that another member's interests are being affected.

Requiring board members to withdraw from decisions that present a potential conflict.

Establishing procedures, such as competitive bids, that ensure that the organization is receiving fair value in the transaction.

## **HOW WELL DOES YOUR BOARD FUNCTION?**

### **Assess Your Needs**

Individual members as well as the board can assess how effectively the board functions. Some general questions you might want to ask are:

1. Who prepares the agenda? Are the purpose and tasks of each meeting clearly stated in the agenda?
2. Are the members familiar with the meeting agenda? Do they know how it relates to previous meetings?
3. Do people come prepared, with relevant reports and information?
4. Are meetings well attended?
5. Do meetings start on time?
6. Do agenda items call for group thought or can they be handled by an individual?
7. Are differences of opinion encouraged as a means of seeing additional options?
8. Is there a balanced amount of participation, or do a few people dominate the meeting?

**How are decisions made? It is also helpful if you look at the way you personally participate during meetings.**

1. Do I come on time to meetings, or do I come late and expect a summary of what's happened so far?

2. Do I understand the purpose of the particular meeting and what we want to accomplish, or do I attend just to “play it by ear?”
3. Do I try to direct attention toward the relevant topics whether or not I’m the designated leader, or do I go off on tangents and encourage others to do the same?
4. Do I share my knowledge and skills when they are related to what we are discussing, or do I wait until someone asks me?
5. Do I participate actively in discussions and suggest new ideas, alternatives, and procedures, or do I just sit and listen?
6. Do I ask questions when I don’t understand, or do I pretend to understand because I think others will think I am stupid?
7. Do I speak up when I feel strongly about something, or do I keep quiet and then complain later when things did not turn out the way I wanted?
8. Do I dominate the meeting or do I encourage others to participate?
9. Do I feel that the leader has total responsibility for the way the meeting goes and grumble if it is poorly run, or do I take responsibility for helping the meeting go well?
10. Do I help set up chairs, serve refreshments and clean up when the meeting is over, or do I disappear when there is set-up and clean-up work to be done?

Taken from *Gaining Momentum for Board Action*, c. 1983, Arty Trost and Judy Rauner, Marlborough Publication, San Diego, CA

# **Addendum I**

*K-8 Elementary School Financial Operation Plan*

Archdiocese of Portland

**K-8 Elementary School Financial Operation Plan (ESFOP)**

Effective July, 1, 2007

**Preamble**

Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Portland in Oregon, established well over 150 years ago, share in the proud legacy of Catholic schools in America—a gift to our archdiocese, the universal church, and to our nation. Archbishop John Vlazny, our chief shepherd of Catholic education in the Archdiocese of Portland, states the following:

*“Our Catholic schools nurture a life of faith, so essential for the church’s evangelizing mission, and they also satisfy the needs of students to understand other people and their cultures, so critical if there is to be peace on earth and in our hearts.”*

As with any true gift, we appreciate and thank the giver. In this archdiocese, we thank all of our forbearers whose vision and passion, diligent perseverance and unbounding generosity contributed to the foundation of our Catholic schools. Likewise, with any gift that is given to us, we respect the giver by taking care of this gift with genuine respect and true stewardship.

Therefore, in this revision of the Elementary School Financial Operation Plan, originally promulgated in 1995, we renew and update our commitment to Catholic education in our archdiocese. We also call upon all who benefit from this gift of our Catholic schools to commit to the renewal, financial security and longevity of our Catholic schools in a true spirit of Christian stewardship of God’s providential care of his children through Catholic education.

**INTRODUCTION:**

Each school is responsible for generating sufficient funds to cover the costs of operations. Schools are to forecast the total cost using Archdiocesan expense guidelines.

**SOURCES OF FUNDING:**

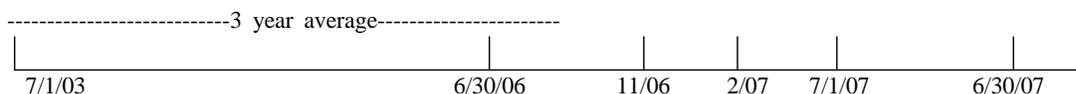
**I. Parish Participation**

Parishes represent the first and basic level of financial support to elementary schools. All parishes, regardless of whether or not a parish is the site of an elementary school, share cooperatively in the funding of Catholic education.

**A. Subsidy from Parishes with Schools**

A parish with a school will contribute 20% of its average offertory collections for the most recent three years towards the support of its parish school. (See sample timeline following.) This support will provide a secure stream of income for the school in meeting its total cost.

Example: The church and school budgets are prepared November 2006 – February 2007 for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2007. Average offertory collections for the fiscal years July 1, 2003 through June 30, 2006 will be the base for calculating 20% subsidy for the parish school for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2007.



It is expected that this policy will be phased in completely by the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2009. Parishes which do not comply with this policy by July 1, 2009 should submit a proposed funding plan to the Archbishop through the Superintendent of Catholic Schools by March 31 of each year.

**Excess School Income**

A school that raises revenues in excess of expenses may use these revenues for school programs to be determined by the school administration and local School Advisory Council with the approval of the Pastor in consultation with the Administrative Council. Parish subsidy should not be decreased because of successful fund raising efforts. It is recommended that a percentage of all fund raising revenues go toward the endowment fund.

**B. Subsidy from Parishes Without Schools**

In light of an archdiocesan-wide commitment to communal support of Catholic schools, every non-school parish with children in another parish school is expected to pay subsidy for each qualifying Catholic student in grades K - 8. The current amount of \$650 per year is to increase by \$50 per year for the next six years, beginning July 1, 2007 until the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2012, when the subsidy will be \$950 a year per qualifying Catholic student. The subsidy will be adjusted each year thereafter by a percentage corresponding to the annual inflation rate.

A qualified student is determined as follows:

- a. The student's family must be registered, be involved, and attend church in the parish.
- b. The family must give regular, identifiable financial support to the parish (e.g., use of parish contribution envelopes or checks).
- c. Parishes may not add additional requirements.

The school will do the billing and collections involved in this process. In addition, the school will send a financial report to the parish paying a subsidy and to the Department of Catholic Schools.

The Archdiocese will establish a fund to assist non-school parishes having difficulty in meeting their financial obligation. If for any reason(s) a non-school parish is unable to fund in whole or in part the required subsidy, the parish must forward to the Department of Catholic Schools a letter describing the reason(s) for a claim of financial difficulty. The Department of Catholic Schools will then collaborate with the Department of Financial Services to review non-school parish claims of hardship. The Archdiocese will determine in collaboration with the non-school parish an appropriate financial assistance grant. The Department of Catholic Schools may determine additional criteria or conditions for financial assistance for non-school parishes in fulfilling their school subsidy.

Parents choosing to send their children to another Catholic elementary school when their registered parish has room for their children in its own school are not eligible for this subsidy. However, if there is no available space in the parish of registration, and following a practice already in place in several parishes, the school pastor may offer to forward a subsidy to another parish with a school for qualifying students until space becomes available.

The Department of Catholic Schools will prepare an annual report documenting compliance with these policies on the part of both non-school parishes and parishes with an elementary school. Non-compliance issues will be referred to the Vicar General.

## **II. Tuition**

A combination of tuition, fund raising, parish subsidy, and endowment earnings is expected to fully fund the operating expenses of the school. Each school will determine tuition rates based on an estimate of the amount of funding each source mentioned above will provide. The total cost of operating the school divided by the number of students enrolled (cost per full-time equivalent student) should be the starting point for determining tuition rates.

Tuition rates will normally be categorized as “qualifying” or “non-qualifying”. Students qualifying (as defined above) for subsidy from a parish will pay the discounted “qualifying” tuition rate. All other students will pay the “non-qualifying” rate. It is recommended that the non-qualifying tuition rate approximate the full cost per student, reduced by a pro-rata share of the fundraising income. Schools are encouraged to inform families of the true cost of educating a student. The decision regarding discounts for multiple enrollments, nature of payment plans, allocation of student financial aid, and collection of accounts will be left to the determination of each school.

In the final analysis revenue sources must be sufficient to carry 100% of the expense of the operation. A school should not budget a deficit without prior consultation with the Department of Catholic Schools.

### **III. Other Income Sources**

As stated above, the mix of various revenue sources will vary from school to school depending on its endowment funds, success of fundraising efforts, and the amount of Archdiocesan support received.

#### **A. Development**

Schools are encouraged to have a development program. Development and fundraising activities are the responsibility of each school. Development efforts should include estate planning and securing private gifts, as well as pursuing corporate and foundation support. Schools that are successful in development, such as conducting an annual appeal and an auction, generally have a stronger financial base and a brighter fiscal future.

#### **B. Endowment**

Many schools have endowment funds. Earnings from these endowments are to be used to provide tuition scholarship assistance, enhancement of school programs, or to meet emergency operating expenses in certain recommended instances.

#### **C. Archdiocesan Support**

The Archdiocese targets a funding level of approximately \$300,000 for elementary school support from the Archbishop's Catholic Appeal. These funds are supplemented with interest from the Catholic Education Endowment Fund (CEEF) and are used for tuition assistance grants for eligible students. Eligible students are baptized Catholics with demonstrated financial need. Individual families apply to the Department of Catholic Schools for these grants. Grant monies are paid directly to the school attended by the grant recipient.

### **IV. Capital Expenditures and Capital Improvements**

Questions often arise regarding what is a capital expenditure. The Parish Administrative Manual includes the accounting definition of a capital expenditure. A capital expenditure is a payment of at least \$3,500 for a tangible item which has a useful life of more than one year. For financial reporting purposes, a capital expenditure will be recorded on the financial statements as an asset to be depreciated over the useful life of the asset rather than as an expense in the year the payment was made. Examples of capital assets include, but are not limited to, computers, copiers, telephone systems, playground equipment, vehicles, kitchen equipment, modular classrooms, building additions and capital improvements.

A capital improvement is an expenditure of at least \$3,500 which has a useful life of more than one year and either adds to the value or useful life of the facility. Examples of capital improvements include, but are not limited to, roof replacement, new electrical wiring or plumbing, substantial window replacement, resurfacing the parking lot, addition of a computer lab, overhauling or replacing the heating or air conditioning system. Although the costs of ordinary repairs, maintenance, janitorial services and preventive maintenance often exceed \$3,500, these are not capital items. These costs will be recorded as expenses in the year the costs are incurred. Examples include, but are not limited to, plumbing repair, patching of the parking lot, replacing broken windows, or stripping and waxing classroom or gym floors.

In terms of funding capital expenditures, the school is responsible for funding capital expenditures for furniture and equipment needed for operating the school. The school is also responsible for funding capital improvements which are for the sole use of school programs (such as a computer lab). Consistent with the treatment of other shared costs, the costs of capital improvements to buildings used by both the parish and the school are to be allocated to the parish and school using some reasonable method such as relative percentage of time used by each, the square footage of the building used by each, and/or some other reasonable basis of allocation. It is strongly encouraged that both parishes and schools set aside funds for future major repairs and capital improvements.

# **Addendum II**

*Introductory Canons of Catholic Education*

## INTRODUCTORY CANONS ON CATHOLIC EDUCATION

### CANON # SUMMARY:

- C. 773 Duty of Pastors of souls to provide for catechesis of Christian faithful.**
- C. 774 Catechesis pertains to all members of the Church.**
- C. 775 The diocesan bishop is to issue norms on catechesis.**
- C. 776 The pastor is bound to provide for catechetical formation.**
- C. 777 The pastor is to make provision for catechesis for sacraments, those who are handicapped, and for young people and adults.**
- C. 778 Religious institutes to impart catechetical formation.**
- C. 780 Local ordinaries to see that catechists are properly prepared.**

### PERTINENT CANONS ON CATHOLIC EDUCATION

- C. 793 Parents have the obligation and the right to educate their children and to seek provision for the suitable Catholic education of their children.**

- Text of Canon:
1. Parents as well as those who take their place are obliged and enjoy the right to educate their offspring; Catholic parents also have the duty and the right to select those means and institutions through which they can provide more suitably for the Catholic education of the children according to local circumstances.
  2. Parents also have the right to make use of those aids to be furnished by civil society which they need in order to obtain Catholic education for their children.

- C. 794 The Church has a role in education based on the God-given mission to aid people on their journey to Christ. The church is human society capable of education.**

**Pastors of souls (bishops and parish priests) have the duty to “arrange things” so all the faithful may enjoy a Catholic education.**

- Text of Canon:
1. The duty and right of educating belongs in a unique way to the Church which has been divinely entrusted with the mission to assist men and women so that they can arrive at the fullness of the Christian life.
  2. Pastors of souls have the duty to arrange all things so that all the faithful may enjoy a Catholic education.

**C. 795 Educational goals of Catholic education: holistic (the whole person), developmental, social, and personal education.**

Text of Canon: Since a true education must strive for the integral formation of the human person, a formation which looks toward the person's final end, and at the same time toward the common good of societies, children and young people are to be so reared that they can develop harmoniously their physical, moral and intellectual talents, that they acquire a more perfect sense of responsibility and a correct use of freedom, and that they be educated for active participation in social life.

**C 796 Catholic schools are a primary means of Catholic education. Parents and teachers are partners in education.**

- Text of Canon:
1. Among educational means the Christian faithful should greatly value schools, which are of principal assistance to parents in fulfilling their educational task.
  2. It is incumbent upon parents to cooperate closely with the school teachers to whom they entrust their children to be educated; in fulfilling their duty teachers are to collaborate closely with parents who are to be willingly heard and for whom associations or meetings are to be inaugurated and held in great esteem.

**C. 797 Parents are to be free in choosing schools.**

Text of Canon: It is necessary that parents enjoy true freedom in selecting schools; the Christian faithful must therefore be concerned that civil society acknowledges this freedom for parents and also safeguard it with its resources in accord with distributive justice.

**C. 798 Parents are obliged to see to the Catholic education of their children.**

Text of Canon: Parents are to entrust their children to those schools in which Catholic education is provided; but if they are unable to do this, they are bound to provide for their suitable Catholic education outside the schools.

**C. 799 The Christian faithful are to take action in the civil community to assist in providing for positive public policies on education.**

Text of Canon: The Christian faithful are to strive so that in civil society the laws which regulate the formation of youth provide also for their religious and moral education in the schools themselves in accord with the conscience of the parents.

**C. 800 The Catholic Church has the right to establish and supervise schools of all types. The Christian faithful are to support schools.**

- Text of Canon:
1. The Church has the right to establish and supervise schools of any discipline, type and grade whatsoever.
  2. The Christian faithful are to foster Catholic schools by supporting their establishment and their maintenance in proportion to their resources.

**C. 801 Religious institutes establish Catholic schools with the consent of the diocesan bishop.**

Text of Canon: Religious institutes, whose proper mission is that of education, while faithfully retaining this mission of theirs, are also to devote themselves to Catholic education through their schools established with the consent of the diocesan bishop.

**C. 802 The diocesan bishop is responsible to see to the establishment of schools with the Christian spirit. The diocesan bishop is to provide for the establishment of diverse types of schools as required.**

- Text of Canon:
1. If schools imparting an education imbued with the Christian spirit are not available the diocesan bishop is to see to it that they are established.
  2. The diocesan bishop is to provide for the establishment of professional schools, technical schools and other schools required by special needs whenever such would be advantageous.

**C. 803 KEY CANON**

**To be considered Catholic:**

1. A school must be under the direction of church authority, or,
2. Under the direction of a public juridic person, or,
3. Recognized by ecclesiastical authority in a written document.

**The school must be operated by or recognized by Church authority. Formation and education must be based on Catholic doctrine.**

**Competent Ecclesiastical Authority:** Holy See, diocesan bishops, local ordinaries. This authority may be delegated to the Superintendent of Catholic Schools (see C. 137).

- Text of Canon:
1. That school is considered to be Catholic which ecclesiastical authority or a public ecclesiastical juridic person supervises or which ecclesiastical authority recognizes as such by means of a written document.
  2. It is necessary that the formation and education given in a Catholic school be based upon the principles of Catholic doctrine; teachers are to be outstanding for their correct doctrine and integrity of life.
  3. Even if it really be Catholic, no school may bear the title Catholic school without the consent of the competent ecclesiastical authority.

**C. 804 Catholic formation, even outside of a Catholic school, remains subject to ecclesiastical authority. The local ordinary (bishop, episcopal vicars, vicar general), is to be concerned that teachers of religion are outstanding for their correct doctrine and skill.**

- Text of Canon:
1. Catholic religious formation and education which are imparted in any schools whatsoever as well as that acquired through the various media of social communications are subject to the authority of the Church.
  2. The local ordinary is to be concerned that those who are assigned as religion teachers in schools, even in non-Catholic ones, be outstanding for their correct doctrine, their witness of Christian living and their pedagogical skills.

**C. 805 The diocesan bishop has the right to name or approve teachers of religion, and may demand their removal or remove them if needed for reasons of religion or morals. This authority can be delegated.**

Text of Canon: For his own diocese the local ordinary has the right to name or approve teachers of religion and likewise to remove or to demand that they be removed if it is required for reasons of religion or morals.

## **C. 806 KEY CANON**

**The diocesan bishop has the right of the following for Catholic schools located in his territory:**

Vigilance over schools.

Visitation of schools, even those directed by members of religious institutes.

Issuance of prescriptions dealing with general regulation of Catholic schools.

**Directors of Catholic schools are to see that instruction is academically distinguished.**

Scope of vigilance and visitation;

Quality of Christian education;

Regulation of education policies or general guidelines;

Strict legislative policies must be given by the diocesan bishop himself since it is legislation and cannot be delegated;

Less formal policies could be instruction or guidelines, for which executive authority, which can be delegated, would suffice;

This is an area though which collegial decision making with school councils is assisted by consultation and discussion.

Text of Canon: 1. The diocesan bishop has the right of vigilance over and visitation of the Catholic schools located in his territory, even those schools which have been established or are being directed by members of religious institute; he is likewise competent to issue prescriptions dealing with the general regulation of Catholic schools; such prescriptions are also operative for those schools which are directed by religious, with due regard for their autonomy regarding the internal management of their schools.

2. The directors of Catholic schools, under the vigilance of the local ordinary, are to see to it that the instruction given in them is at least as academically distinguished as that given in the other schools of the region.

**C. 127 Although the canons do not specifically call for or recognize “School Boards/Councils” as such, it is certainly within the competence of the local bishop in the exercise of his competence “to issue prescriptions dealing with the general regulation of Catholic schools” (Canon 806); and to mandate the creation of a school council for each school to exercise its own role according to diocesan regulations and the general law of the church. This role should be clearly defined in the constitution which is approved by the local bishop after review by the Office of Catholic Schools.**

**Such councils cannot exceed the authority given to them by the mandate of the bishop; nor can they assume the responsibilities of the canonical administrator. They do, however, exercise a function which is important to the school and which is rooted in canon law. They are similar to parish councils. In that such councils are advisory to the canonical administrator, their contribution is one of “counsel.”**

Text of Canon: 1. When the law determines that in order to place certain acts a superior requires the (consent of) counsel of a college or group of persons, the college or group must be convoked according to the (constitution)... when counsel alone is to sought; however, for such acts to be valid it is required... that the counsel of all those present be sought.

2. When the law determines that a superior in order to place certain acts requires the... counsel of certain persons as individuals:

If counsel is required, the action of the superior is invalid if the superior does not listen to those persons; although in no way obliged to accede to their recommendation, even if it be unanimous, nevertheless, the superior should not act contrary to it, especially when there is a consensus, unless there be a reason which, in superior's judgment, is overriding.

Note: This canon makes it clear not only that those who give counsel offer their opinions seriously but also that administrators give serious attention to their recommendations and not act contrary to them in an arbitrary manner.

Although the canon does not speak of an appeal against the decision of the superior/administrator, it is clear he may be called upon to justify the "overriding" nature of the reasons he has to act contrary to a consultative vote, especially if it represents a consensus.

### **Catholic School Advisory Council— Pastor/Canonical Administrator**

The role of the Catholic School Advisory Council is based on the mandate of the archdiocesan archbishop by which according to archdiocesan regulations such Councils are constituted for individual schools.

The scope and responsibility of the School Advisory Council must be within the bounds of the mandate of the archbishop, archdiocesan regulations and the canon law of the Church. No power or authority may be given to the Council which exceeds the limits of canon law and archdiocesan regulations.

All policies, therefore, regarding the role and function of the Council must be made with a clear understanding of the nature of the juridic person, which is the parish which operates the school, or which is the structure which the archbishop has established for a truly interparochial school or consolidated school. This clarity is no less important in the cases of truly archdiocesan high schools which come under the direction of the Office of Catholic Schools or some other archdiocesan administrator. At the same time, the administrative responsibilities of the pastor or designated administrator should also be clearly understood. These responsibilities are clearly defined in canon law.

This awareness is important not only for an understanding of structures but also for the formulation of policies regarding Councils and administrative processes. Policies, either for Councils or administrators, which are not in conformity with canon law may pass by unnoticed or even seem plausible. However, in the case of a conflict or disagreement, it will be the canon law which will prevail either to the embarrassment of the Council or the pastor, not to mention the Office of Catholic Schools.

The overview of canonical perspectives which is made part of this report is an effort to present applicable canons.

In general, the responsibilities of the pastor of a strictly parochial school can more easily be defined. In the case of interparochial schools or consolidated schools, their designation in canon law as juridic persons is sometimes overlooked and the naming of canonical administrators is neglected. These situations should be rectified by decree of the archbishop which designates the school as a juridic person and names a pastor or combination of pastors as the canonical administrator of the school. Where the nature and structure of the institution is not clear, a vacuum in administrative responsibilities is created. This vacuum is only too readily abused by those who are willing to assume these responsibilities and “authority.” Situations such as these where there is an abdication of responsibilities or a lack of understanding give rise to confusion of roles which leads to conflict and discord.

### **Canon 803 “Catholic” School**

That school is considered to be Catholic which ecclesiastical authority or a public juridic person supervises or which ecclesiastical authority recognizes as such by means of a written document.

It is necessary that formation and education given in a Catholic school be based upon the principles of Catholic doctrine; teachers are to be outstanding for their correct doctrine and integrity of life.

Even if it really be Catholic, no school may bear the title “Catholic School” without the consent of the competent ecclesiastical authority.

**Canon 805** For his own archdiocese the local ordinary has the right to name and approve teachers of religion and likewise to remove or demand that they be removed if it is required for reasons of religion or morals.

### **Canon 806 Rights of the Ordinary**

The archdiocesan archbishop has the right of vigilance over and the visitation of Catholic schools located in his territory, even those schools which have been established or are being directed by members of religious institutes; he is likewise competent to issue prescriptions dealing with the general regulation of Catholic schools; such prescriptions are also operative in those schools which are directed by religious, with due regard for their autonomy regarding the internal management of their schools.

\*Note: Canon establishes the right of the archbishop to exercise vigilance and his competence to issue archdiocesan regulations for Catholic schools.

The directors of Catholic schools, under the vigilance of the local ordinary, are to see to it that the instruction given in them is at least as academically distinguished as that given in other schools of the region.

\*Note: Paragraph two of the canon recognizes the office of “director” or principal for a Catholic school who is truly an administrator.

## **CATHOLIC SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL—PRINCIPAL**

The involvement of the School Advisory Council in the administration of the school seems to result from a misunderstanding of its function vis-a-vis the canonical administrator. It almost necessarily follows that the Council will assume certain responsibilities as far as the administration of the school by the principal is concerned.

It is important, therefore, that the language of policies regarding School Advisory Councils reflects the role of the principal as the chief administrator of the school and that it is not the role of the Council to be involved in administration. Often the term “administration” is used in an overly broad sense and by extension a “hands on” power is given to Councils.

### **Practical Observations:**

1. The existence of the local School Advisory Council derives from the mandate of the archbishop.
2. The “authority” of the Council derives from its by-laws approved by the archbishop/pastor.
3. The responsibility of the pastor/canonical administrator derives from his office and appointment by the archbishop.

This responsibility cannot be abdicated particularly in the areas of Catholic doctrine and policy, financial matters, and hiring and firing policies.

4. The matter of giving or withholding approval for school policies by the pastor should be clearly explained. The term “veto” is reminiscent of the presidential “veto” in civil law. The manner in which the withholding of approval is handled should be clearly stated.

The manner in which an appeal is handled should also be clearly stated.

## **CATHOLIC EDUCATION—CATHOLIC SCHOOLS:**

### **Canon 796 School Parents—Organizations**

Teachers are to collaborate closely with parents who are willing to be heard and for whom associations or meetings are to be inaugurated and held in great esteem.

## CATHOLIC SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCILS

Although the canons do not specifically call for or recognize “School Advisory Councils” as such, it is certainly within the competence of the local archbishop in the exercise of his competence “to issue prescriptions dealing with the general regulation of Catholic schools” (Canon 806) to mandate the creation of a School Advisory Council for each school to exercise its own role according to archdiocesan regulations and the general law of the Church. This role should be clearly defined in the by-laws which is approved by the local archbishop after review by the Office of Catholic Schools.

Such Councils cannot exceed the authority given to them by the mandate of the archbishop; nor can they assume the responsibilities of the canonical administrator. They do, however, exercise a function which is important to the school and which is rooted in canon law. They are similar to parish councils. In that such Councils are advisory to the canonical administrator, their contribution is one of “counsel.”

**Canon 127** When the law determines that in order to place certain acts a superior requires the (consent or) counsel of a college or group of persons, the college or group must be convoked according to the (constitution)...when counsel alone is to be sought; however, for such acts to be valid it is required...that the counsel of all those present be sought.

When the law determines that a superior in order to place certain acts requires the... counsel of certain persons as individuals:

If counsel is required, the action of the superior is invalid if the superior does not listen to those persons; although in no way obliged to accede to their recommendation, even if it be unanimous, nevertheless the superior should not act contrary to it, especially when there is a consensus, unless there be a reason which, in the superior’s judgment, is overriding.

**\*Note:** This canon makes it clear not only that those who give counsel offer their opinions seriously but also that administrators give serious attention to their recommendations and not act contrary to them in an arbitrary manner.

Although the canon does not speak of an appeal against the decision of the superior/administrator, it is clear he may be called upon to justify the “overriding” nature of the reasons he has to act contrary to a consultative vote, especially if it represents a consensus.

## EPILOGUE

A major trend of post-Vatican II ecclesiology sees the Church as collaborative enterprise, in which laypeople must be fully involved in the workings and decision-making processes of the Church... Whether accidentally or providentially, our developing view of the Church sees this enlarged involvement of laity at a time when such involvement is sorely needed. (Adam J. Maida, J.D.,

Despite the high level of lay participation in the affairs of incorporate apostolates that the membership model allows, it is still not unusual for laypersons to feel that they are not full participants in these Church-sponsored institutions despite the promise of the Second Vatican Council. They are limited to seats on the Council of trustees, who must defer to the corporate members in some matters, or they can serve as administrators or employees but they are not permitted total control. Actually, the way the canon law is formulated, i.e., ownership of Church property is limited to public juridic persons and the governance of public juridic persons belongs to the canonical steward (a cleric or a religious), by definition limits this lay participation to assisting the canonical steward to govern and really prevents direct lay governance. The suggestions made by this handbook on corporate structure must recognize this fact. If they did not, they would do a disservice to our audience. (Maida and Cafardi, OP. cit., p. 249)

It is generally assumed that it is the responsibility of a leader, and in particular an administrator, to make decisions. Analysis of the various components that go into the making of a decision, however, makes it clear that no administrator should attempt to “make decisions” alone. While not everyone can be a choice maker, those who are given that role must fulfill their responsibility in conscious dependence upon others for factual data, creative ideas, implementive initiatives, and evaluative feedback. While shared responsibility is not to be equated with democracy, neither can it be made compatible with autocracy. (*Robert T. Kennedy, J.D., J.U.D., “Shared Responsibility in Ecclesial Decision-Making,” Paper presented to the Annual General Meeting, Canadian Canon Law Society, October 22-25, 1979, reprinted in Studia Canonica*)

# **Addendum II**

*Recommended By-laws for School Advisory Council*



**ARCHDIOCESE  
OF PORTLAND  
IN OREGON**

**RECOMMENDED BY-LAWS SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL**

**ARTICLE I**

**TITLE**

The name of this body shall be (*name of school*)  
School Advisory Council hereinafter referred to as the Advisory Council.

**ARTICLE II**

**NATURE AND FUNCTION**

The mission of the Council shall be to provide policy direction for program needs of the school, especially in Planning, Finances and Development, and Marketing; to promote the implementation of said policies; and to insure that all local policies are in accord with the intent and spirit of the policies established for the Catholic schools of the Archdiocese of Portland.

**ARTICLE III**

**MEMBERSHIP OF THE COUNCIL**

**SECTION 1. NUMBER AND COMPOSITION**

- a) Members of the School Advisory Council shall be the Pastor (ex officio), the School Administrator (ex officio), and appointed members.
- b) The School Advisory Council shall have an Executive Officer, the School Administrator, responsible to the Advisory Council for carrying out its policies and accountable to the Pastor and to the Department of Catholic Schools through the Archdiocesan Superintendent of Catholic Schools.
- c) Said Council is advisory to the Pastor and has no governing and/or regulatory power. The Pastor is the enactor of all school policy.

**SECTION 2. TENURE OF OFFICE**

Each elected member shall serve a term of 3 years, with the exception that the original members may serve terms varying from one to three years, to insure stability of the council.

### **SECTION 3. ELECTION, VACANCIES, REMOVAL**

- a) A nominating committee consisting of the Pastor/Canonical Administrator, the Principal, and the Chairperson of the Advisory Council shall seek out and prepare a slate of prospective council member nominees. The Advisory Council will then recommend candidates to the pastor for appointment.

Newly appointed members of the Advisory Council shall take office\_\_\_\_\_.

Retiring members shall leave office on\_\_\_\_\_.

- b) Unexpired terms of Advisory Council members or of Advisory Council members disqualified shall be filled by the Pastor through appointment.
- c) Any member of the Advisory Council, other than an ex officio member, who is absent from two regular meetings of the Advisory Council during one academic year (August through and including June) may, unless excused by action of the Advisory Council, cease to be a member.

### **ARTICLE IV**

#### **OFFICERS**

##### **SECTION 1. ORGANIZATION**

The officers of the Advisory Council shall include a Chairperson, an Assistant Chairperson, and a Secretary. The Chairperson, Assistant Chairperson, and Secretary shall be voting members of the Advisory Council.

##### **SECTION 2. ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

- a) Officers shall be elected at the\_\_\_\_\_meeting of the council. They shall hold office for two years and may be re-elected for one year additional term.
- b) All appointed members of the Advisory Council are eligible for any office.

##### **SECTION 3. DUTIES OF THE OFFICERS**

- a) The Chairperson shall preside at all regular and special meetings of the Advisory Council.
- b) The Assistant Chairperson shall perform all the duties of the Chairperson when s/he is absent or unable to act.
- c) The Secretary shall maintain a written record of all acts of the Advisory Council; conduct, receive, and dispose of all correspondence as directed; and preserve all reports and documents committed to his/her care.

**ARTICLE V.**

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**MEETINGS**

**SECTION I. REGULAR AND SPECIAL MEETINGS.**

- a) The Advisory Council shall meet four times, at a publicly designated room during the school year according to a calendar determined in advance by the Council.
- b) With the authorization of the pastor, special meetings of the Advisory Council may be called by the Chairperson as needed or by a majority of the voting members. If time permits, notice of special meetings shall be given twenty-four (24) hours in advance stating the nature of the meeting, the tie, and the place.
- c) Because of the advisory nature of the Council, no meeting will be held without the Pastor and/or Principal in attendance.

**SECTION 2. QUORUM**

- a) For the purpose of transacting official business, it shall be necessary that a majority of the total voting members be present and voting. "Voting members" of the Advisory Council shall mean appointed representative and *ex officio* members.
- b) A simple majority of those present and voting shall carry the motion, decision, and/or election unless otherwise specified in the constitution.

**SECTION 3. OPEN MEETINGS**

All meetings of the Advisory Council are to be open meetings unless designated as being closed.

**SECTION 4. VISITORS**

- a) Meetings of the School Advisory Council shall be open. The Advisory Council reserves the right to declare closed sessions whenever confidential matters may be discussed.
- b) The right of non-members to address the Advisory Council shall be limited to those whose petition has been approved by the Pastor, School Administrator, and Advisory Council Chairperson.

**SECTION 5. MINUTES**

Written minutes of all meetings of the Advisory Council, shall be maintained by the Secretary, shall be preserved in the archives, and shall be sent to all members in a timely manner.

**SECTION 6. RULES OF PROCEDURE**

The Advisory Council may fix its own rules of procedure, but in the absence of such rules, Robert's Rules of Order shall apply.

**SECTION 7. AGENDA**

The Chairperson with the assistance of the Pastor and Principal shall be responsible for preparing the agenda. Individual Advisory Council members desiring an item to be included on the agenda shall notify the Chairperson or School Administrator at least ten business days prior to any regular meeting. Ordinarily, the agenda and the supporting committee reports are to be sent to members ten business days in advance of the meeting.

**ARTICLE VI**

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**COMMITTEES**

**SECTION 1. STANDING COMMITTEES**

The Standing Committees for the School Advisory Council shall be: Mission, Finance, Marketing/Publicity, Facilities, Development/Endowment and Nominations Committees.

**SECTION 2. AD HOC COMMITTEES**

- a) The Advisory Council may, by resolution, provide for such other committees as it deems advisable and may discontinue the same at its pleasure.
- b) Each committee shall have such powers and shall perform such duties as may be assigned to it by the Advisory Council and shall be appointed and vacancies filled in the manner determined by the Advisory Council. In the absence of other direction, the Chairperson shall appoint all committees.

**SECTION 3. Members**

The chair of each committee whether standing or ad hoc must be a member of the advisory council. Non-advisory committee members may be invited to serve on committees. The term of a non-advisory council member shall be two years, renewable.

**ARTICLE VII**

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**AMENDMENTS**

**SECTION 1. AMENDMENTS**

This constitution may be amended, supplemented, suspended, or repealed, in whole or in part, by a vote of two-thirds of the total voting membership subject only to regulations of the Archdiocese and the approval of the Pastor.

**SECTION 2. PRESENTATION**

Amendments must be presented to the Advisory Council in writing at least two weeks prior to one meeting for discussion and voted on at a subsequent meeting.

**SECTION 3. BYLAWS**

Bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the total members of the Advisory Council providing the amendment has been presented at the previous meeting of the Advisory Council and

subject to approval by the Pastor and the Superintendent of Catholic Schools.

**OFFICIAL SIGNATURES**

**DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**APPROVAL:** \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Pastor)*

**DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**APPROVAL:** \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Superintendent of Catholic Schools)*