

Catholic School Personnel and the Call to Ministry

Catholic Schools, in the course of their educational efforts, provide an essential ecclesiastical ministry. “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” (Canon 794, § 1). School personnel are instrumental in the development of each and every student as a Catholic person. It is through school employees, who act as ministers of the Catholic faith, that a school can cultivate a love of Christ in the hearts of its students.

Canon Law states that Catholic “teachers must be outstanding in true doctrine and uprightness of life” (Canon 803). The U.S. bishops have reminded Catholic school leaders that this mandate applies to teachers in all disciplines:

“Recruit teachers who are practicing Catholics, who can understand and accept the teachings of the Catholic Church and the moral demands of the Gospel and who can contribute to the achievement of the school’s Catholic identity and apostolic goals. ... The distinctive Catholic identity and mission of the Catholic school also depend on the efforts and example of the whole faculty. ... All teachers in Catholic schools share in the catechetical ministry” (*National Directory for Catechesis*, pp. 231, 233).

All school personnel, regardless of their religious affiliation, are therefore required to abide by the moral values advanced by the teachings of Christ, the tenets of the Catholic Church, and the policies and regulations of the Diocese and the employing school. The Diocese, in its role as an employer, expects all employees to be persons, who by word and deed, support and advocate the positions of the Catholic Church and to recognize that *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* constitutes the source and standard according to which all ethical matters are understood and adjudicated. School personnel may be disciplined or terminated for violations of these standards, or any conduct which is contrary to, or rejects or offends the teachings, doctrines, or principles of the Catholic Church. An electronic copy of the Catechism can be found at [Catechism Online](#). School personnel will be required to sign a ministerial agreement indicating their desire to answer the call to ministry and to accept the requisite responsibilities that accompany that decision.

In order to ensure that school personnel possess the knowledge and experiences needed to be ministers of faith and to allow for the opportunity for personal spiritual reflection and growth, the following formation plan has been developed. This plan builds upon the foundational meetings held with faculty during the 2019-2020 school year and will continue to evolve based on the needs identified through routine feedback opportunities. Formation will be primarily provided through the Diocese of Bridgeport Leadership Institute through a series of online “courses” which are approximately 30 minutes in length.

Formation Plan:

- I. 2020-2021 School year and all future 1st year employees
 - a. Bishop Caggiano Video on Truth, Beauty & Goodness
 - b. Introduction to Leadership Institute
 - c. Two 30-minute courses on generational ministry
 - d. 30-minute course on Catechesis
 - e. Completion of “Ministerial Inventory” to assist in the creation of individual and personalized learning paths
 - f. Completion of a reflection on the personal acceptance of the Call to Ministry

- II. 2021-2022 school year and all future employees following their first year
 - a. Formation beyond the first year is a credit-based system (5 credits per year)
 - b. Employees will receive 1 credit for each course taken

- i. Some courses may be required (i.e., understanding apologetics or Theology of the Body)
- ii. Some courses will be recommended based on ministerial inventory results or role in the school (i.e., teachers of religion may have additional requirements based on their coursework or preparation for the role)
- iii. School employees may then choose from a list of elective courses. Sample courses include:

- 3201 – The Four Marks of the Church, Part 1
- 3202 – The Four Marks of the Church, Part Two
- 4602 – Engage Parents, Form the Family
- 4703 – Youth on the Margins
- 4302 – Witnessing Faith to Others
- 4303 – Taking Risks as Evangelists for Christ
- 4302 – Engaging Others in the Faith
- 4301 – Forming Every Heart
- 3802 – The Dignity of the Human Person
- 3702 – Laudato Si – Care for Our Common Home
- 3601 – The Church as the People of God
- 1502 – Balancing Life and Ministry
- 3801 – Introduction to Catholic Social Teaching
- 4403 - The Basic Structure of The Mass
- 3401 – Our Catholic Faith: Rituals and Symbols

- c. Employees may also receive credits based on voluntary personal experiences (i.e., participation in spiritual direction, workshops or community service activities)

Non-Ministerial Positions:

The Diocese generally considers all employees as ministers of our Catholic faith. However, while we expect all teachers, counselors, social workers and administrators, in their role as formators, to act as ministers of the faith, we recognize that certain categories of staff may not require the same level of commitment as those who have contact with students on a regular basis and therefore do not carry the same level of responsibility in student formation. Though we expect these individuals to live a moral and virtuous life, to be respectful of our beliefs and practices and to refrain from any public disparagement of the Church, we recognize that they may not be able to fully participate in the sacramental life of the Church.

Depending on their specific job description, these may include positions such as:

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Bookkeeper | Landscapers |
| Business manager | Back office secretarial staff |
| Registrar | Cook |
| Night time custodial staff | School data clerk |

If school leadership determines, after consultation with the Office of the Superintendent, that a position is to be considered as non-ministerial, they must clearly communicate that designation to the employee at the time of hire. Those hired in non-ministerial roles should not be placed in situations that may provide the opportunity for formation. This includes trips, retreats, counseling, teaching activities, and other similar situations.