

Looking to the Future with Confidence

New Policies for Catholic Schools



Timeline

Oct 2007: Convocation on Catholic Education with over 500 clergy, educators, parents and parishioners

Jan 2008: Four task forces formed to research key areas

Feb-Oct 2008: Research into local and national best practices

Sept 2008: Archbishop Wuerl issues pastoral letter on education

Nov-Dec 2008: Over 12,000 people are sent surveys about school policy options; 1,500 respond

Feb 2009: Focus groups with pastors, educators and parishioners

Feb-Mar 2009: Consultation with 6 consultative groups

Apr 2009: 1,000 people invited to 8 regional consultations on draft policy options

May 2009: Additional consultation with 3 consultative bodies and discussion at Priest Convocation

Fall 2009-July 2010: Policies finalized and promulgated; published as they are completed

Archdiocese of Washington

Summer 2009

The responsibility of the whole Church

You may not think Catholic schools matter unless your child is enrolled in one, but the fact is they do matter—to all of us.

As Catholics, we have a shared responsibility to pass on the faith to our young people. It is the responsibility of the whole Church and Catholic schools remain essential to this mission.

“We look to the future of Catholic education throughout our archdiocese with the hope to renew in our hearts of all members of this Church a sense of ownership of all the expressions of education, particularly our schools,” wrote Archbishop Donald W. Wuerl in his 2008 pastoral letter, *Catholic Education: Looking to the Future with Confidence*.

Like all schools, Catholic schools have had to adapt to many changes in recent decades, from increased costs to shifting demographics. As a result, Catholic schools are



policies for the nearly 100 Catholic schools in the archdiocese have been developed in four key areas: Catholic identity, academic excellence, governance and afford-

ability and accessibility.

These policies seek to strengthen Catholic schools and support for Catholic schools across the entire archdiocese. They include a new model for funding schools that more equitably distributes the cost among all parishes, and increases the amount of tuition assistance available to families. (See next page for more detail on what the new policies cover.)

Parent, pastor, educator and parishioner input has been a critical part of developing the policies. Thousands of people were invited to respond to surveys, participate in focus groups or attend regional meetings to review draft policy options.

facing the most challenging time in their history, and there is a great need to address these challenges and to recognize our collective responsibility for Catholic schools so they continue to educate future generations.

In October 2007, Archbishop Wuerl convened a Convocation on Catholic Education. More than 500 clergy, educators, parents and parishioners attended and reached a consensus that a comprehensive process to review and revise Catholic school policies was necessary to sustain and strengthen the schools.

After an 18-month process, including research and extensive consultation, new

A look at the new policies for Catholic schools

CATHOLIC IDENTITY

Policies on the Catholic identity of schools are focused on four areas:

- A school's visible communion and cooperation with the bishop
- Appropriate celebration of sacramental life
- Teaching of the faith
- An environment permeated with the Gospel spirit

Among other things, these policies outline the relationship between the archbishop and schools; religious education programs in schools; student attendance at school prayer and worship; and guidelines for school mission statements.

GOVERNANCE

These policies define the different types of Catholic schools in the archdiocese; for example, parish schools, regional schools and independent schools. They also define the relationship, roles and responsibilities of these different schools and the archdiocese. In addition, for archdiocesan owned and operated schools, the policies more clearly outline the roles and responsibilities for pastors, chief administrators and other leadership positions.

The policies outline the process for approving a new independent Catholic school in the archdiocese; the appointment of school advisory boards; and the process to add or eliminate grade levels, among other things.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Academic excellence is central to the mission of all Catholic schools. It requires uniform policies to ensure that the declaration of the quality of Catholic education is in fact verifiable. These policies address essential school-wide requirements in four sections:

- Academic/curriculum standards
- Instructional standards
- Assessment standards
- Professional standards

These policies provide the foundation for the contents for all school handbooks and address the principles of behavior for school personnel, students, families and the wider school community. They include policies on selecting textbooks; the use of technology in schools; interpreting and disseminating testing results and degree; and certification requirements for administrators, teachers and counselors.

AFFORDABILITY

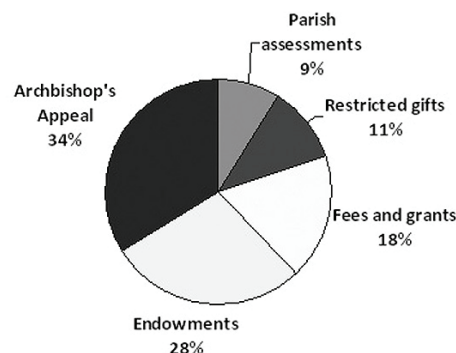
These policies seek to keep Catholic schools affordable for families while ensuring that schools are adequately funded. They outline a new model for Catholic school funding that includes:

- Shifting archdiocesan support from subsidies for a few schools to tuition assistance to help families across all schools
- Expanding outreach by the archdiocese to donors interested in supporting tuition assistance
- Increasing the education assessment of parishes to more evenly distribute the support for Catholic schools and families among all parishes

These affordability policies reflect a consensus that Catholic schools are the responsibility of the entire archdiocese and not just parishes with schools. Already, the archdiocese has doubled tuition assistance available for families in need to \$4 million for the upcoming school year. That is five times the amount of tuition assistance available two years ago.

Under the new policies, parishes would likely see an increase in archdiocesan assessments for education starting in July 2010 to strengthen support for Catholic school education and more equitably distribute that support for families across the archdiocese who are seeking a Catholic school education.

FY09 Archdiocesan Funding for Education
(Over \$7 million)



Next steps...

The policies and implementation guidelines will be finalized starting this summer. Policies will be published as they are officially promulgated over a number of months, and will be implemented between fall 2009 and July 2010.