



DIOCESE OF HARRISBURG SECRETARIAT FOR EDUCATION

CODE OF ETHICS FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOL EDUCATORS

“The nobility of the task to which teachers are called demands that, in imitation of Christ, the only Teacher, they reveal the Christian message not only by word but also by every gesture of their behavior.”¹ Therefore, Catholic school educators strive to sustain the highest degree of ethical conduct in their four-fold commitment to: the student, the family, the community and the ministry of teaching.

COMMITMENT TO THE STUDENT

“Students should be able to recognize authentic human qualities in their teachers. They are teachers of the faith; however, like Christ, they must also be teachers of what it means to be human. This includes culture, but it also includes such things as affection, tact, understanding, serenity of spirit, a balanced judgment, patience in listening to others and prudence in the way they respond and finally, availability for personal meetings and conversations with students. A teacher who has a clear vision of the Christian milieu and lives in accord with it will be able to help young people develop a similar vision, and will give them the inspiration they need to put it into practice.”²

The Catholic school educator makes the well-being of students the foundation of all decisions and actions. Therefore, the Catholic school educator:

- Provides a nurturing atmosphere which supports discipline with dignity, the freedom to create dreams and the opportunity to practice Christian virtue
- Promotes an educational environment that provides a sound moral and intellectual foundation, recognizes and responds to individual differences and encourages each child to develop his/her God-given gifts
- Preserves the student’s right to privacy by judiciously protecting information that is confidential
- Protects the student when his/her well-being is threatened by unsafe, incompetent, unethical, or illegal actions of any person, student or adult

COMMITMENT TO THE FAMILY

The first and primary educators of children are their parents. Partnership between a Catholic school and the families of the student must continue and be strengthened: not simply to be able to deal with academic problems that may arise, but rather so that the educational goals of the school can be achieved. Close cooperation with the family is imperative in order to build a partnership based on faith.³

The Catholic school educator is called to assist families in fulfilling their obligation for the Christian formation and education of their child. Therefore, the Catholic school educator:

- Recognizes and appreciates the uniqueness of each family environment
- Provides opportunities for family involvement in school/parish faith-community
- Ensures collaboration with parents, active listening to parents’ concerns, and open communication and dialogue with respect to parents’ fundamental human right to know, to understand, and to share in decisions that affect the education/formation of their child
- Provides clear expectations and understanding of curriculum goals

COMMITMENT TO THE COMMUNITY

“Community is at the heart of Christian education not simply as a concept to be taught but as a reality to be lived.”⁴
“The vocation of every Catholic educator includes the work of ongoing social development: to form men and women who will be ready to take their place in society, preparing them in such a way that they will make the kind of social commitment which will enable them to work for the improvement of social structures, making these structures more conformed to the principles of the Gospel. Thus they will form human beings who will make human society more peaceful, fraternal and communitarian.”⁵

The Catholic school educator believes the Catholic school community is both an agent of appropriate change and a preserver of basic tradition. Therefore, the Catholic school educator:

- Regards the school community as an integral part of the parish and a vital force for preparing future Church and civic leaders
- Develops within one’s self and cultivates within students a keen social awareness of issues that impact moral life and a profound sense of civic and political responsibility
- Challenges students to respond to the needs of the time and live out their Christian virtues, helping students to understand cultural, economic differences and similarities
- Designs and engages in service learning opportunities as an integral part of the curriculum
- Develops peacemaking strategies that reflect Christian problem-solving techniques

COMMITMENT TO THE MINISTRY OF TEACHING

“For a Catholic educator, the Church should not be looked upon merely as an employer. The Church is the Body of Christ, carrying on the mission of the Redeemer, through history.”⁶ *The vocation of the Catholic educator, then, is not only a summons to professionalism. It is also a summons to personalism, challenging Catholic teachers and administrators to proclaim the Church’s heritage through the example of their lives and to engage in a unique participation in the prophetic mission of Christ, reflecting Christian joy in the teaching ministry.⁷*

The Catholic school educator performs teaching responsibilities with diligence and integrity. Therefore, the Catholic school educator:

- Commits one’s self to spiritual formation by developing a greater understanding of the faith and the means to share it
- Enhances self-competence by continuing education to increase knowledge and skills
- Fosters a philosophy of education which encourages lifelong learning
- Promotes professionalism by respecting and preserving the privacy and dignity of colleagues and by conscientiously fulfilling the terms of professional employment
- Upholds the authority of the school when communicating with parents, students, and the school community

This code has been adapted from the 1982 and 1997 Code of Ethics for Catholic School Educators - National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA)

1. The Documents of Vatican II, Declaration on Christian Education – 1965
2. The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School (RDECS) #96 – 1988
3. Adapted from: The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School #42/3, 1988
4. To Teach as Jesus Did #23 – 1972
5. The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School #96 – 1988
6. Address to Teachers - John Paul II – 1987
7. Adapted from: The Vocation of the Catholic Educator - Jacobs, R.M. – 1996)