DIOCESE OF HARRISBURG – SECRETARIAT FOR EDUCATION
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2026 Golden Apple Award
Principal Eligibility Requirements, Nomination and Application Process, and Selection Criteria

Through the generosity and kindness of the Donahue Family foundation, the Golden Apple Award has been established to honor outstanding individuals who devote themselves to teaching in Catholic schools.

The Diocese of Harrisburg recognizes the unique responsibilities Catholic school educators have with regard to the holistic development of those students entrusted to their care. These educators are not only state-certified, but must also meet diocesan catechetical certification standards, which helps to ensure the integration of Gospel values and the Catholic Faith in all subject areas. As such, the Catholic school educator is a special person who guides students as they strive to reach their full intellectual and spiritual potential.

In light of the valuable contributions made by Catholic school educators to the Church and society, the Diocese of Harrisburg demonstrates its appreciation through the Golden Apple Award program.

Principal Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible to apply to be considered for a Golden Apple Award, a principal who is nominated:

1. Must be a practicing Catholic
2. Must have completed a minimum of three (3) full years as a principal in the elementary or secondary school at which he/she is currently employed
3. Must have an Instructional II certificate
4. Must have an Administrative I certificate
5. Must have the Basic Catechetical Certificate

Principal Nomination and Application Process

A principal may be nominated by a parent or a teacher, and the nomination must be approved by the pastor of the school's parish (for elementary school principals), or the school chaplain (for secondary school principals).

1. Principal nominations are submitted online to the Office of Catholic Education by **February 2, 2026.** Nominations are then forwarded to the nominee's pastor (for

elementary school principals) or the nominee's school chaplain (for secondary school principals) for approval.

2. Before the nomination is approved, the nominee's pastor (for elementary school principals) or school board chairperson (for secondary school principals) verifies that all of the eligibility requirements have been satisfied.

3. Once eligibility has been confirmed and the nomination has been approved, the nominee who wishes to be considered for the award completes and submits an online application to the Office of Catholic Education. Applications are then forwarded to the applicant's pastor or school chaplain, who is asked to submit a letter of recommendation for the applicant.

   Completed applications are to be submitted online no later than <u>February 27, 2026.</u>

Principal Selection Criteria

The selection process takes into consideration the following:

1. Nominator's recommendation
2. Applicant's essay
3. Applicant's record of professional development (including evaluation of applicant's submission of Act 48 hours from the Pennsylvania Department of Education)
4. Evidence of applicant's commitment to his/her students and school
5. Evidence of applicant's exemplary leadership qualities
6. Evidence of applicant's service to the Church and community
7. Evidence of applicant's witness/example of Christian discipleship as a Catholic school administrator