DIOCESE OF HARRISBURG – SECRETARIAT FOR EDUCATION
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# 2026 Golden Apple Award
# Teacher 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.*

## Teacher Eligibility Requirements

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

1. Must be a practicing Catholic
2. Must be a full-time teacher
3. Must have completed a minimum of five (5) full years in the elementary or secondary school at which he/she is currently employed
4. Must have state teaching certification (Note: Secondary school Theology/Religion teachers are exempt from this requirement)
5. Must have the Basic Catechetical Certificate (elementary school teacher nominees only)
6. Must be able to verify his/her participation in at least three years of faculty Religion/Faith Formation in-services (secondary school teacher nominees only)

## Teacher Nomination and Application Process

An elementary school teacher may be nominated by a fellow teacher, a parent, or a student and his/her parent(s). A secondary school teacher may be nominated by a fellow teacher, a parent, or a student.

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

2. Before the nomination is approved, the nominee's principal 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 principal, who is asked to submit a letter of recommendation for the applicant. In addition, the applicant's pastor or school chaplain is asked to submit a letter of recommendation for the applicant.

   **Completed applications are to be submitted online no later than February 27, 2026.**

## Teacher Selection Criteria

**Please Note:** Multiple teachers from the same school may be nominated and may apply for consideration for the Golden Apple Award, but ***only one*** teacher applicant from each diocesan school may be selected for the award each year.

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, if applicable)
4. Evidence of applicant's commitment to his/her students and school
5. Evidence of applicant's exemplary teaching skills
6. Evidence of applicant's service to the Church and community
7. Evidence of applicant's witness/example of Christian discipleship as a Catholic educator