



SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL PRIMER

DEPARTMENT OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
ARCHDIOCESE OF PORTLAND IN OREGON

May 2019

A MEMBER'S PRAYER

I have been asked to serve, Lord, and I have agreed.

**Help me to know my fellow members:
their gifts, their concerns, their lives.**

**I am doing your work, Lord,
and Your love for me and for this, above all,
is personal.**

**Help me to welcome differences of opinion
as a sign of the diversity on this council,
as an opportunity to reach for creative solutions.**

**Help me to recognize this diversity
as a sign of your capacity to love us all
and help me to cherish it as a great strength.**

**Help me to approach issues with an open, inquiring mind,
free from prejudice, with my spirit depending on Yours
for the strength to make hard decisions.**

**Help me to listen;
to know when and to whom I should listen.**

**Help me to learn to use my own gifts
to promote thorough, thoughtful discussion
of important concerns in our Catholic community.**

**Help me to develop my skills as a peacemaker,
to know how and when to mediate,
to conciliate, to negotiate.**

**Help me to enjoy doing your work
and to remember Your promise:**

**Whenever two of us are gathered in your Name,
You are with us.
Be with us now. AMEN.**

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VISION FOR THE FUTURE: Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of Portland

INTRODUCTION: *This vision statement describes a desired future for all Catholic schools in the archdiocese, with the understanding schools already exemplify many of these attributes to varying degrees, and all schools can rise to embrace them even better with greater consistency, creativity, and collaboration.*

Catholic schools will have a **clear Catholic identity**, making missionary disciples of Christ among the emerging generation and transforming the world.

- The entire Catholic school experience will be illuminated by the Catholic faith in ways relevant for students in their culture.
- Students will come to know God and experience Christ in a personal relationship.
- The evangelization of the family will help parents know God and experience Christ along with their students.
- Parents will be engaged in the spiritual development of their children and all aspects of their education.
- Teachers, administrators and staff will reflect and model Catholic values.
- Students will learn to be service minded and embrace Catholic social teachings.
- Every school will be a strong community of faith that has close ties with the local sponsoring parishes and surrounding parishes.
- Parents and students will be connected to and serve in their local parish communities.
- The mission of Catholic school education will be an integral part of the mission of every parish.

Catholic schools will be **academically excellent**, preparing students holistically (spiritually, intellectually, morally and physically) for the world in which they will live.

- Teaching methodologies, educational programs, and school facilities will support a 21st century education.
- Catholic schools will be creative and flexible in how they deliver an outstanding education serving a wide range of student needs in a variety of circumstances.

Catholic schools will be **available and accessible** throughout the archdiocese today and for generations to come.

- Catholic schools will be available and present where Catholics are living and are anticipated to be living in the future.
- Parents from all income levels will be able to access Catholic schools, particularly middle and low- income families.
- Catholic schools will employ strong financial models and business practices, ensuring long-term viability.
- Participation from growing ethnic groups will mirror the cultural and economic demographics of the local community.
- Participation from students with special learning needs will be accommodated whenever possible.
- Donors, alum, and alum families will be motivated to invest in Catholic schools and to trust Catholic school leaders to be capable stewards of those resources.

THE ROLE, PURPOSE, AND FUNCTION OF A PARISH OR LOCAL SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL

THE ROLE, PURPOSE, AND FUNCTION OF A PARISH OR LOCAL SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL

A Catholic School Advisory Council is a body whose members are selected to participate in decision-making in designated areas of responsibility. A parish school is part of the educational mission of the parish for which the pastor is the canonical administrator. He delegates, according to archdiocesan policy, administrative responsibilities to the school principal, who is accountable to him.

In the Archdiocese, all local School Advisory Councils are advisory in nature. An Advisory Council operates in the policy-making process by formulating and adopting, but never enacting policy. This type of Advisory Council is in keeping with shared decision-making in the Catholic Church because of the advisory status of the archdiocesan presbyteral council and the archdiocesan finance council. The constituting authority (i.e., Pastor) establishes those areas where the Advisory Council is to be consulted. Such action is usually made effective by the Advisory Council's By-laws.

Advisory implies that the pastor will listen to the advice of the Advisory Council in certain designated matters prior to a decision being made. The operating principle is that the pastor will accept the advice which has been given, especially when there is a consensus, unless the pastor has an overriding reason. It is customary, but not obligatory, for the pastor to communicate this reason to the advisory body.

The umbrella role of a Catholic School Advisory Council is to provide policy direction for the school. This very general responsibility resolves into eight distinct functions:

I. ASSURE MISSION EFFECTIVENESS

The mission of Catholic schools is an expression of the Church's mission of salvation and an instrument of evangelization. As a faith community, students, parents, and educators, in unity with the Church, give witness to Christ's loving communion in the Holy Trinity.

With this Christian vision, Catholic education fulfills its purpose of transmitting culture in the light of faith, integrally forming the human person by developing each student's physical, moral, spiritual and intellectual gifts, teaching responsibility and right use of freedom, preparing students to fulfill God's calling in this world, and attaining the eternal kingdom for which they were created. Through education the Church seeks to prepare its members to proclaim the Good News and to translate this proclamation into action

II. TO PARTICIPATE IN AND ENCOURAGE STRATEGIC PLANNING

Establishing goals and objectives, for long-range and short-range plans.

Establishing goals and objectives for its internal operations will enable the Advisory Council to deal effectively and realistically with its work during the course of the school year. These goals and objectives will provide a basis for the advisory council's self-evaluation.

In formulating a long-range plan, the Advisory Council has the opportunity to gather the information and then to work with the pastor and principal to develop the ideal picture of what things should look like at the end of the plan.

III. TO DEVELOP AND DEFEND POLICY

Formulating policies in accord with Archdiocesan policies which give general direction for administrative action.

A policy by definition is a guide to discretionary action. It is a written expression of the Advisory Council's intention regarding some aspect of educational organization or operation. The Executive Officer, the principal, is the person who implements the policy.

IV. TO OFFER FINANCIAL ADVICE

Developing plans/means to finance the educational programs including tuition, development, and fundraising, allocating resources according to a budget, and monitoring these plans.

It is the principal's task, in conjunction with the school finance committee, to prepare the budget, using as many resource people at the parish level as necessary, especially the parish finance council.

It is the Advisory Council's task:

- to analyze and discuss the proposed budget;
- to present it to the parish finance council and to the pastor for his approval; to adopt it; subject to its being balanced by necessary income;
- to identify funding sources and amounts needed from tuition, fundraising, parish investment, development efforts, etc.;
- to monitor compliance to the budget by the administration.

V. TO PROVIDE FOR GOOD PUBLIC RELATIONS

That is, communicating with various publics on behalf of the school.

VI. TO EVALUATE ITSELF

Determining its own effectiveness in light of its mission and its responsibilities as outlined by Archdiocesan policy and by its own by-laws.

The Advisory Council's productivity is based on the goals and objectives which give the Advisory Council specific direction each year. The Advisory Council's internal operations are based on how the Advisory Council spends its time and how members operate within their bylaws. To enable a professional evaluation of the principal according to Archdiocesan policy and practice and to participate in that evaluation.

VII. TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROCESS OF SELECTING THE PRINCIPAL, WHO IS THE ADVISORY COUNCIL'S EXECUTIVE OFFICER

The pastor will invite Advisory Council members to participate in the search committee when a principal needs to be hired according to Archdiocesan policy and practice.

The Catholic Schools Office will assist parishes in their search by facilitating the process. In a prayerful context, the search committee makes its consensus recommendation to the pastor.

Upon the approval of the Archbishop, and with the recommendation of the Superintendent of Catholic Schools, the pastor hires a candidate for the principal position who will do the best possible job in the local setting.

VIII. ONE ADDITIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ROLE: GENERATIVITY

It is the responsibility of the Advisory Council in collaboration with the pastor and the principal to assess and define membership needs and then to recruit and recommend individuals for appointment to the council by the pastor that meet those needs. In collaboration with the pastor and the principal, the council also needs to orient new members to the school's mission, programs, services, goals, and aspirations as well as issues and opportunities.

ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:

Ordinarily, School Advisory Councils should have between 10 and 15 appointed members serving three-year terms, plus the Pastor and Principal as ex officio members. In determining membership eligibility, the following issues should be among those considered:

- supporting member of the parish; parent of a child attending the school
- twenty-one years of age or older;
- genuine interest in Catholic school education; ability to work effectively with others;
- willingness to maintain high levels of integrity and confidentiality; willingness to support archdiocesan/parish/school philosophy and mission; be a credible witness of the Catholic faith to the school and beyond;
- not a salaried employee of the particular parish or school;
- not an immediate relative of a salaried employee as determined by the pastor;
- support member of the parish
- current school parent
- past school parent
- alumni
- member of another parish that sends students to the school

MEMBERSHIP QUALIFICATIONS:

Individuals being considered for School Advisory Council membership should have identifiable skills or expertise (e.g., legal, financial, public relations, etc.) to present themselves as candidates for Advisory Council membership. The contribution such people make benefits the entire parish/school community. When certain areas of expertise are not possessed by Advisory Council members, efforts should be made to recruit such people to serve on the committees of the council.

The following are examples of desirable qualifications for those who would serve on Catholic school Advisory Council:

- a willingness to find the time to serve conscientiously; ability to be objective and free of personal self-interest;
- ability to influence public opinion favorably in areas of importance to the school; a willingness to learn while serving as an Advisory Council member;

- a demonstrated competence in his/her chosen field;
- a willingness to support Advisory Council decisions even if s/he does not fully agree; a willingness to accept working within the framework of an Advisory Council.

ADVISORY COUNCIL RELATIONSHIPS

THE PASTOR AS ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBER

The pastor's role on the local school Advisory Council is clear and cogent in Canon Law. Since the great percentage of Catholic schools in our nation are parish based, they, like other agencies and programs of the parish, are more directly the responsibility of the local pastor. Therefore, the "authority" of the Council derives from its by-laws approved by the archbishop/pastor. This responsibility of the pastor/canonical administrator derives from his office and appointment by the archbishop. This responsibility cannot be abdicated particularly in the areas of Catholic doctrine and policy, financial matters, and hiring and firing policies. In effect, the pastor is the council's pastoral leader but he is especially its spiritual leader.

The pastor, as spiritual leader, shares his pastoral vision and offers other spiritual insights that will enrich and improve the quality of the advisory board's/council's policy making. His most important contribution will more than likely be in the area of religious education, worship and sacramental preparation. As pastoral manager, the pastor furnishes to the Advisory Council vital information about income, expenditures, etc., which only he possesses. As a full member of the Advisory Council, the pastor is aware that all local policies must be ratified by him before they can be implemented and, therefore, shares in policy discussion, sharing his insights, expertise and recommendations.

The pastor's leadership is a dynamic force in the creation and growth of the Christian educational community. One important fact to emphasize with regard to the pastor-Advisory Council relationship is that pastors need not bear the burden of decision-making alone. Lay people are willing and able to use their talents and gifts in participating in the educational ministry of the Church.

THE PRINCIPAL AND THE ADVISORY COUNCIL

The principal is the educational leader and an executive officer of the Advisory Council. As such, s/he provides educational direction to the Advisory Council. S/he is the link between the Advisory Council and the school with its faculty, students and parents, as well as the inspiring force which helps the Advisory Council to lift itself above budget and finances and see its role in the mission of the Church.

The agenda for Advisory Council meetings is a way in which the principal can provide solid training and guidance for the Advisory Council, by helping to see that it is drawn up with care and that it distinguishes carefully between the various types of agenda items that can be included. It is crucial that the principal phrase recommendations carefully so that all can tell the difference among items that are meant to be information, discussion, advice or action.

The principal keeps the Advisory Council informed about the operation of the school and about archdiocesan processes and procedures. S/he prepares and submits policy recommendations and is responsible for policy implementation after ratification by the pastor.

EXPECTATIONS: THE CHAIRPERSON AND THE ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Chair of the school Advisory Council plays an integral role of leadership. He/she is expected to work with the pastor, principal, and Council members in a relationship and process that is supportive and goal-oriented.

The chair should see his/her role as a facilitator who helps the Council organize itself to serve the needs of the school community. The Council chairperson never sets himself/herself up (or by the expectation of others) as a “power broker” who vies for authority which is not properly his/hers to possess. Therefore, the Council chairperson must be a person who has effective leadership qualities in directing the work of the Council in collaboration with the whole parish community, particularly the pastor and the principal.

EXPECTATIONS: PRINCIPAL FROM ADVISORY COUNCIL AND ADVISORY COUNCIL FROM PRINCIPAL

An Advisory Council should expect much from its principal, should see the principal as the educational expert and should utilize that expertise to the maximum extent possible for the good of all segments of the school community. By the same token, however, the principal as a professional has a right to expect much from the Advisory Council. Each should have a complete understanding of what the other's expectations are.

A PRINCIPAL SHOULD BE ABLE TO ASSUME THE ADVISORY COUNCIL WILL:

- Acknowledge that the school is a significant expression of the teaching mission of the Church and functions within its structure;
- Model a faith community in the spirit of interdependence with the pastor and principal; Act in an ethical and responsible manner, and at all times observe confidentiality;
- Acknowledge the administration of the school to be the principal's responsibility and support him/her in his/her efforts;
- Furnish objective counsel and advice;
- Have an established set of policies to guide the Principal in performing his/her role; Give honest feedback on the principal's policy implementation on a regular basis;
- Adhere to Archdiocesan policy and develop local policies which will enable the school to reach its goals;
- Follow agendas or expected procedure in Advisory Council meetings so the principal can be adequately prepared to respond to questions, issues, etc.;
- Be fully and carefully prepared for each meeting by doing the required readings and completing necessary tasks for committee work and reports;
- Be loyal to Advisory Council decisions even though personally opposed to the final recommendations and decisions;
- Review and update the local bylaws when necessary, and as approved by the pastor; Collaborate in the school's five-year planning endeavors;
- Pray often for other members of the Advisory Council, their Catholic school and the community it serves.

AN ADVISORY COUNCIL SHOULD BE ABLE TO ASSUME THAT THE PRINCIPAL AS AN EXECUTIVE OFFICER WILL:

- Prepare the Advisory Council meeting agenda in collaboration with the pastor and the chair in a businesslike manner to keep meetings to a reasonable length;
- Treat all Advisory Council members alike and not show preference to individual members; Strictly enforce or implement the policies set by the Advisory Council and ratified by the pastor as well as all archdiocesan policies;
- Keep the membership informed on Advisory Council matters;
- Avoid unexpected issues, topics and areas of action at Advisory Council meetings, so the Advisory Council can have adequate time to respond after being fully advised of all the facts;
- Support Advisory Council recommendations;
- Keep the Advisory Council advised of changes, innovations and trends in education that might be applicable to the school;
- When appropriate, keep the Advisory Council informed of serious or potentially serious issues;
- Operate the school in a fiscally sound and responsible manner;
- Provide leadership in the implementation of the school's five year plan.

THE ADVISORY COUNCIL AND THE COMMUNITY

The local school Advisory Council is in a unique position in relation to the school. It not only knows the school—its goals, programs, strengths, weaknesses, successes, failures, dreams and struggles, but it also knows and is part of the thinking and questioning of the laity who are called upon to support the school. This places the school Advisory Council in a unique position to “sell” the school, to be the public relations arm of the school, to market the product of Catholic education.

One of the standing committees, then, of every local school Advisory Council should be a public relations committee.

It would be the task of this committee to publicize both the workings of the Advisory Council and the programs of the school. Working with the principal, the public relations committee would make maximum use of all media resources available. Within the parish itself, the Sunday Bulletin is a resource that should be used. In addition, the local Advisory Council might choose to publish its own newsletter. Local newspapers, also, are often effective sources of publicity.

The specific task for a school public relations committee would include planning for the following:

- maintaining continuous communications with parish organizations and the total parish community;
- stimulating public interest in the school;
- producing written materials for dissemination to news media, governmental bodies and local groups;
- producing audio-visual materials to tell the school story; justifying the need for greater financial support for the school;

- promoting such legislation that will benefit the school by active involvement in making contact with local and state legislators.

ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETINGS

NUMBER OF MEETINGS

The Advisory Council should ordinarily have four regular meetings during the course of a school year. Special meetings can be added, if needed.

PURPOSE OF MEETINGS

The parish places its Catholic school educational aspirations in the hands of the Advisory Council and, in so doing, gives the Advisory Council the opportunity to shape the school's future. The Advisory Council in its meetings concentrates on its basic functions which are:

- to implement at the local level the objectives and policies of the Archdiocese;
- to perform officially the specific actions required of the local Advisory Council by its by-laws;
- to make policies affecting the local situation that will guide the principal and staff; to monitor the principal's implementation of Advisory Council policies;
- to evaluate the effect of the advisory council's policies on the total educational program.

PREPARING THE AGENDA

Developing the agenda is the most important part of the preparation process, since the agenda identifies the issues to be dealt with at the meeting and provides for orderly discussion.

The task of preparing the agenda ordinarily belongs to the Principal, either in conjunction with or following consultation with the Advisory Council, pastor, and chairperson. The process should, of course, include an orderly way for Advisory Council members or others to submit agenda suggestions, for inappropriate items to be disallowed, etc.

Agenda and other written materials that will assist them, such as committee reports, should be e-mailed sufficiently in advance of a meeting to allow Advisory Council members to come prepared. Materials should be in the hands of the members ten days before a meeting. A productive meeting within a specified time framework of perhaps one and a half to two hours will result.

Advisory Council members should come to a meeting informed so they can discuss to decide. The primary focus of a meeting ordinarily should not be to inform.

SUGGESTIONS FOR A FAST-PACED AND PRODUCTIVE MEETING

There are things an Advisory Council can do to speed up its meetings, and, what is more important, to see that it talks about something worthwhile during its sessions. If an Advisory Council will take the following suggestions, its meetings will be shorter, its members will be happier, its decisions will be better and its school will probably be improved:

- Start on time. Set ending time, generally no longer than two hours; Never discuss any subject which is not on the printed agenda;
- Do not listen to written material read aloud. This includes minutes, correspondence, reports, etc. Have all of it e-mailed in advance;

- Have the Principal, as an Executive Officer of the Advisory Council, edit the minutes prior to sending them out. The Pastor should sign off;
- Abandon the traditional agenda format and substitute one in which all action items are separated from all the information items;
- Establish the dates, time and place for the year's meetings at a minimum of six months in advance.
- Close the meeting crisply and on a positive note.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Should an issue arise which requires greater confidentiality, an executive session should be held. Only appointed and *ex officio* board members may be present.

AGENDA PACKET

In order for Advisory Council members to make sound decisions during the meetings, it is desirable to furnish them with background materials on each agenda item in advance of the meeting. This enables members to study the material at their leisure, call the principal for more information, if needed, in advance of the meeting and be prepared to vote at the meeting with a minimum of discussion necessary.

Enclosures may be prepared by the principal or by Advisory Council members who have information on agenda items. The agenda packet, which is sent by the principal, should include:

- The minutes of the last meeting;
- The agenda;
- Committee reports with action items noted;
- Financial report;
- The principal's report;
- Background materials for proposals or other agenda items.

EFFECTIVE COUNCIL COMMITTEES

A strong committee structure is a characteristic of successful school governance bodies. Committees are an efficient way to handle the great variety of responsibilities of the governance body. Given the scope of the task, it is a method of working effectively. A small group can handle issues in depth, get in depth knowledge, and get specialized information. A governance body needs to process all the work that comes before it. But not everyone has to deal in every issue at the same depth. The role of committees is to process all work of the board, to examine issues in its competence in depth, and then to review and recommend policies and actions in its area of competence to the entire body for discussion and decision. A committee is a small group that can process items and bring options to the full council for consideration. This method of processing the work of a council is one of the most important elements of quality decision making. Without an appropriate committee structure, it is very difficult for the council to properly carry out its decision-making and oversight role.

COMMON STANDING COMMITTEES

- A finance committee;
- A building and grounds committee;
- A resource development/public relations committee;
- And a Catholic identity committee;
- Executive;
- Nominating & board development;
- Strategic planning;
- Finance.

SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL

REASONS FOR A SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL

1. To promote participation in the ministry of Catholic education.
2. To develop ownership and stability for the future.
3. To offer financial advice.
4. To develop policy.
5. To serve as a good public relations source.
6. To enable the Principal to spend adequate time as an educational leader.
7. To encourage strategic planning.

AREAS OF COUNCIL RESPONSIBILITY

1. Mission effectiveness.
2. Planning.
3. Policy formulation.
4. Finances.
5. Participation in Principal Search Committee.
6. Development, including public relations and marketing.
7. Evaluation of school advisory council goals.
8. Generativity; perpetuating itself.

WHAT A COUNCIL DOES NOT DO

1. Discipline.
2. Develop school programs.
3. Approve materials.
4. Hire or terminate staff.
5. Tell the principal how to do things.
6. Act as a grievance board.
7. Send out questionnaires without authorization.
8. Regulatory or administrative actions.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARD	SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
Hires administrator.	May be asked to serve on Search Committee to recommend an administrative candidate to pastor; pastor is the hiring agent.
Evaluates the administrator	With the pastor, enables a professional evaluation of the administrator. The pastor is the hiring agent.
Enacts policy for system.	May recommend policy to the pastor; pastor enables policy. Is responsible for supporting the established policy.
Makes regulations regarding the running of school.	May be asked for opinions and advice; the administrator makes regulations with the pastor's approval. Is responsible for supporting the principal's implementation.
Has the final word with respect to decisions regarding the school	The pastor has the final word on the decisions affecting the school. Is responsible for advising about and supporting the decisions made by the proper authorities.

THE GOOD COUNCIL MEMBER

Councils are only as effective and productive as the people who serve on them. Labeling some members as good and others as bad is common; seldom, however, does one hear of a clear definition of what constitutes a “good” council member. As a starter, the following guidelines are offered:

A GOOD COUNCIL MEMBER...

- Is technically a council member only when the school council is in session. No one person, unless authorized, should presume to speak on behalf of the Council.
- Avoids decisions which are administrative in nature, recognizing them to be the responsibility of the principal.
- Is well acquainted with archdiocesan and local school policies. Votes at all times for what is in the best interest of the students.
- Is flexible and realizes that there are times when changes must be made, when tradition cannot be honored, and when pressure must be ignored.
- Remembers that council business requires confidentiality.
- Is interested in obtaining facts, but remembers also that the principal has the responsibility of operating the school rather than having to spend full time making reports to the council or to individual members.
- Knows that the reputation of the entire school is reflected in his/her behavior and attitude. Is a good listener at council meetings, on the street corner, in the church, but never commits himself/herself, the council, or the Principal.
- Insists that all policies be set forth in writing and that they be periodically evaluated. is able to separate fact from fiction, rumor from reality.
- Supports the principal in his/her administration of the school.
- Understands the need for team work among council, principal and pastor and, as a result, supports decisions when they are made.

MOST DIFFICULT THINGS FOR SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS TO LEARN

Experienced school advisory council members from across the nation were asked to identify the most difficult lesson or fact they had to learn about council service.

Here's what they said most often:

- Determining what your function is on the council and how to accomplish it effectively. That no matter what you think you know about council service when you first come on council, you still have a lot to learn.
- Learning to acknowledge publicly that you have no power and authority as an individual advisory Council member; that only the council as a whole can function.
- Recognizing the difference between formulating policy (the council's job) and administering the school (the principal's job).

- That you must represent all the parents/students. Your decision must be made in the interest of the total school and not made solely for special groups or interests.
- Learning how to respond to the complaints and concerns of parents, school administrators and other staff.
- That change comes slowly.
- That you can't solve everyone's problems by yourself.
- That you must think deeply and sometimes accept a reality that is contrary to your own beliefs.
- That effective council membership means being able to hold the minority viewpoint when voting on a given issue; then openly supporting the majority vote or consensus position in your community.
- Discovering how the school is funded.

ETHICS FOR SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS

1. Give the time, thought, and study necessary to get the job done right—Do your homework!
2. Seek adequate data—A few opinions are not enough for a serious discussion.
3. Uphold final decision of the council even if your opinion had differed.
4. Function in harmony and cooperation.
5. No individual member speaks for the group—no one has legal authority.
6. Keep confidential matters confidential. If council sessions are open, not much is classified as “confidential information.” Executive sessions are exclusive and by their nature confidential.
7. Work always for the welfare of the students in the school—have no personal “ax to grind.”
8. Be constantly aware that you are working in an advisory capacity for the betterment of the school.
9. Stick to your proper function.
10. Sell the school—good public relations is always needed. Seek positive input!

SOME THINGS POLICIES CAN DO

1. Give general direction to the administration. (However, the council must be careful not to tie the hands of the principal with a collection of detailed demands and restrictions; it is the principal's job to run the school.)
2. Anticipate and forestall crises. (While policy cannot prevent a lawsuit, it can guide the principal to take reasonable precautions and reduce the possibility that rash judgment or negligence will rule the crisis situation.)

3. Clarify expectations for students, parents, teachers and others – policy lets people know where the school stands and “what happens if...” they choose to disregard that position. Those associated with school have a right and a duty to know what the school expects of them.
4. Codify and preserve the councils’ decision – policies should not be a well-kept secret, nor should council members have to sift through piles of old minutes in order to trace the decision of their predecessors. Once enacted, new policies should be promulgated, numbered and placed in a folder of school policies on the school’s website, the only official site of the school’s policies.

SOME THINGS POLICIES CANNOT DO

1. Control or supervise administration – the council should be able to trust the principal to implement policy and manage the day-to-day operations of the school. The principal is the school’s professional leader-that is the job he/she has been hired to do. If, after unsuccessful attempts to resolve differences, the council cannot put faith in the administrator, then the council’s responsibility is to give feedback to the school pastor, not to try to administer the school.
2. Resolve specific problems after the fact – policies cannot be made to work retroactively. People cannot be held responsible for rules enacted after the fact.
3. Address isolated cases or petty items – to create a policy for the exceptional case is a mistake. It creates misunderstanding regarding the school’s “norms”, it can cause bad will and poor public relations; it can backfire on a council by legitimizing (even glorifying) actions that are unacceptable or petty. Individual cases should be addressed individually by the administrator.
4. Substitute for programs – policies, by their nature give general direction. They cannot educate.

AREAS WHICH NEED POLICIES:

In the Archdiocese, many topics may be covered by policy which supersedes that of the local school council/board. In those cases, the local school council is usually free to make the policy more specific to local circumstances as long as the resulting statement does not conflict with that of Archdiocesan policy. The following list contains topics which sometimes become substance for local school policies:

- Strategic planning;
- Advancement of the school in the community;
- Ongoing financial operations of the school;
- Enhancing the school’s financial resources and endowments;
- Ensuring the Catholicity of the school.

GOOD POLICIES:

Good policies achieve their purpose if they:

- Respond to or anticipate educational needs of the community;
- Are clear enough to give guidance, broad enough to give space;
- Are stated in language that is clear, simple, non-technical;
- Are communicated to all, but especially to those affected;
- Are written down;
- Are systematically indexed and preserved electronically and on the school's website;
- Are regularly evaluated.

WHAT IS A CONFLICT OF INTEREST?

Conflict of interest is difficult to define, yet many people think they know it when they see it. The legal definition of conflict of interest, usually set out in state laws governing nonprofit corporations, is very specific and covers relatively few situations. Most conflicts fall into a gray area where ethics and public perception are more relevant than statutes or precedents.

Conflict of interest arises whenever the personal or professional interests of a council member are potentially at odds with the best interests of the nonprofit. Such conflicts are common: A council member performs professional services for an organization, or proposes that a relative or friend be considered for a staff position. Such transactions are perfectly acceptable if they benefit the organization and if the council made the decisions in an objective and informed manner. Even if they do not meet these standards, such transactions are usually not illegal. They are, however, vulnerable to legal challenges and public misunderstanding.

Loss of public confidence and a damaged reputation are the most likely results of a poorly managed conflict of interest. Because public confidence is important to schools, councils should take steps to avoid even the appearance of impropriety. These steps may include:

- Adopting a conflict-of-interest policy that prohibits or limits business transactions with council members and requires council members to disclose potential conflicts.
- Disclosing conflicts when they occur so that council members who are voting on a decision are aware that another member's interests are being affected.
- Requiring council members to withdraw from decisions that present a potential conflict.
- Establishing procedures, such as competitive bids, that ensure that the organization is receiving fair value in the transaction.

HOW WELL DOES YOUR BOARD FUNCTION?

ASSESS YOUR NEEDS

Individual members as well as the board can assess how effectively the council functions. Some general questions you might want to ask are:

1. Who prepares the agenda? Are the purpose and tasks of each meeting clearly stated in the agenda?
2. Are the members familiar with the meeting agenda? Do they know how it relates to previous meetings?
3. Do people come prepared, with relevant reports and information?
4. Are meetings well attended?
5. Do meetings start on time?
6. Do agenda items call for group thought or can they be handled by an individual?
7. Are differences of opinion encouraged as a means of seeing additional options?
8. Is there a balanced amount of participation, or do a few people dominate the meeting?

HOW ARE DECISIONS MADE?

It is also helpful if you look at the way you personally participate during meetings.

1. Do I come on time to meetings, or do I come late and expect a summary of what's happened so far?
2. Do I understand the purpose of the particular meeting and what we want to accomplish, or do I attend just to "play it by ear"?
3. Do I try to direct attention toward the relevant topics whether or not I'm the designated leader, or do I go off on tangents and encourage others to do the same?
4. Do I share my knowledge and skills when they are related to what we are discussing, or do I wait until someone asks me?
5. Do I participate actively in discussions and suggest new ideas, alternatives, and procedures, or do I just sit and listen?
6. Do I ask questions when I don't understand, or do I pretend to understand because I think others will think I'm stupid?
7. Do I speak up when I feel strongly about something, do I keep quiet and then complain later when things did not turn out the way I wanted?
8. Do I dominate the meeting, or do I encourage others to participate?
9. Do I feel that the leader has total responsibility for the way the meeting goes and grumble if it is poorly run, or do I take responsibility for helping the meeting go well?
10. Do I help set up chairs, serve refreshments, and clean up when the meeting is over, or do I disappear when there is set-up and clean-up work to be done?
- 11.

Taken from *Gaining Momentum for Board Action*, c. 1983, Arty Trost and Judy Rauner, Marlborough Publication, San Diego, CA

Addendum I

Recommended By-laws for School Advisory Council



RECOMMENDED BY-LAWS SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL

ARTICLE I

TITLE

The name of this body shall be *(name of school)*.
School Advisory Council hereinafter referred to as the Advisory Council.

ARTICLE II

NATURE AND FUNCTION

The mission of the Council shall be to provide policy direction for program needs of the school, especially in Planning, Finances and Development, and Marketing; to promote the implementation of said policies; and to insure that all local policies are in accord with the intent and spirit of the policies established for the Catholic schools of the Archdiocese of Portland.

ARTICLE III

MEMBERSHIP OF THE COUNCIL

SECTION 1. NUMBER AND COMPOSITION

- a) Members of the School Advisory Council shall be the Pastor (ex officio), the School Administrator (ex officio), and appointed members.
- b) The School Advisory Council shall have an Executive Officer, the School Administrator, responsible to the Advisory Council for carrying out its policies and accountable to the Pastor and to the Department of Catholic Schools through the Archdiocesan Superintendent of Catholic Schools.
- c) Said Council is advisory to the Pastor and has no governing and/or regulatory power. The Pastor is the enactor of all school policy.

SECTION 2. TENURE OF OFFICE

Each elected member shall serve a term of 3 years, with the exception that the original members may serve terms varying from one to three years, to insure stability of the council.

SECTION 3. ELECTION, VACANCIES, REMOVAL

- a) A nominating committee consisting of the Pastor/Canonical Administrator, the Principal, and the Chairperson of the Advisory Council shall seek out and prepare a slate of prospective council member nominees. The Advisory Council will then recommend candidates to the pastor for appointment.

Newly appointed members of the Advisory Council shall take office_____.

Retiring members shall leave office on_____.

- b) Unexpired terms of Advisory Council members or of Advisory Council members disqualified shall be filled by the Pastor through appointment.
- c) Any member of the Advisory Council, other than an ex officio member, who is absent from two regular meetings of the Advisory Council during one academic year (August through and including June) may, unless excused by action of the Advisory Council, cease to be a member.

ARTICLE IV

OFFICERS

SECTION 1. ORGANIZATION

The officers of the Advisory Council shall include a Chairperson, an Assistant Chairperson, and a Secretary. The Chairperson, Assistant Chairperson, and Secretary shall be voting members of the Advisory Council.

SECTION 2. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

- a) Officers shall be elected at the_____meeting of the council. They shall hold office for two years and may be re-elected for one year additional term.
- b) All appointed members of the Advisory Council are eligible for any office.

SECTION 3. DUTIES OF THE OFFICERS

- a) The Chairperson shall preside at all regular and special meetings of the Advisory Council.
- b) The Assistant Chairperson shall perform all the duties of the Chairperson when s/he is absent or unable to act.
- c) The Secretary shall maintain a written record of all acts of the Advisory Council; conduct, receive, and dispose of all correspondence as directed; and preserve all reports and documents committed to his/her care.

ARTICLE V

MEETINGS

SECTION 1. REGULAR AND SPECIAL MEETINGS

- a) The Advisory Council shall meet four times, at a publicly designated room during the school year according to a calendar determined in advance by the Council.
- b) With the authorization of the pastor, special meetings of the Advisory Council may be called by the Chairperson as needed or by a majority of the voting members. If time permits, notice of special meetings shall be given twenty-four (24) hours in advance stating the nature of the meeting, the time, and the place.
- c) Because of the advisory nature of the Council, no meeting will be held without the Pastor and/or Principal in attendance.

SECTION 2. QUORUM

- a) For the purpose of transacting official business, it shall be necessary that a majority of the total voting members be present and voting. "Voting members" of the Advisory Council shall mean appointed representative and *ex officio* members.
- b) A simple majority of those present and voting shall carry the motion, decision, and/or election unless otherwise specified in the By-laws.

SECTION 3. OPEN MEETINGS

All meetings of the Advisory Council are to be open meetings unless designated as being closed.

SECTION 4. VISITORS

- a) Meetings of the School Advisory Council shall be open. The Advisory Council reserves the right to declare closed sessions whenever confidential matters may be discussed.
- b) The right of non-members to address the Advisory Council shall be limited to those whose petition has been approved by the Pastor, School Administrator, and Advisory Council Chairperson.

SECTION 5. MINUTES

Written minutes of all meetings of the Advisory Council, shall be maintained by the Secretary, shall be preserved in the archives, and shall be sent to all members in a timely manner.

SECTION 6. RULES OF PROCEDURE

The Advisory Council may fix its own rules of procedure, but in the absence of such rules, Robert's Rules of Order shall apply.

SECTION 7. AGENDA

The Chairperson with the assistance of the Pastor and Principal shall be responsible for preparing the agenda. Individual Advisory Council members desiring an item to be included on the agenda shall notify the Chairperson or School Administrator at least ten business days prior to any regular meeting. Ordinarily, the agenda and the supporting committee reports are to be sent to members ten business days in advance of the meeting.

ARTICLE VI

COMMITTEES

SECTION 1. STANDING COMMITTEES

The Standing Committees for the School Advisory Council shall be: Mission, Finance, Marketing/Publicity, Facilities, Development/Endowment and Nominations Committees.

SECTION 2. AD HOC COMMITTEES

- a) The Advisory Council may, by resolution, provide for such other committees as it deems advisable and may discontinue the same at its pleasure.
- b) Each committee shall have such powers and shall perform such duties as may be assigned to it by the Advisory Council and shall be appointed and vacancies filled in the manner determined by the Advisory Council. In the absence of other direction, the Chairperson shall appoint all committees.

SECTION 3. MEMBERS

The chair of each committee whether standing or ad hoc must be a member of the advisory council. Non-advisory committee members may be invited to serve on committees. The term of a non- advisory council member shall be two years, renewable.

ARTICLE VII

AMENDMENTS

SECTION 1. AMENDMENTS

These By-laws may be amended, supplemented, suspended, or repealed, in whole or in part, by a vote of two-thirds of the total voting membership subject only to regulations of the Archdiocese and the approval of the Pastor.

SECTION 2. PRESENTATION

Amendments must be presented to the Advisory Council in writing at least two weeks prior to one meeting for discussion and voted on at a subsequent meeting.

SECTION 3. BYLAWS

Bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the total members of the Advisory Council providing the amendment has been presented at the previous meeting of the Advisory Council and subject to approval by the Pastor and the Superintendent of Catholic Schools.

OFFICIAL SIGNATURES

DATE: _____

APPROVAL: _____

(Pastor)

DATE: _____

APPROVAL: _____

(Superintendent of Catholic Schools)

Addendum II

*National Standards and Benchmarks for
Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools*

NATIONAL STANDARDS AND BENCHMARKS FOR EFFECTIVE CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

*Center for Catholic School Effectiveness School of Education, Loyola University Chicago
in partnership with Roche Center for Catholic Education, Lynch School of Education, Boston College (2012)*

DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

The Defining Characteristics flow directly from the Holy See's teaching on Catholic schools as compiled by Archbishop J. Michael Miller, CSB (*The Holy See's Teaching on Catholic Schools*, 2006), and from statements by Pope Benedict XVI and the American bishops. The characteristics define the deep Catholic identity of Catholic schools and serve as the platform on which the standards and benchmarks rest. The defining characteristics authenticate the standards and benchmarks, justifying their existence and providing their meaning.

1. CENTERED IN THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST

Catholic education is rooted in the conviction that Jesus Christ provides the most comprehensive and compelling example of the realization of full human potential. (*The Catholic School*, 34, 35). In every aspect of programs, life, and activities, Catholic schools should foster personal relationship with Jesus Christ and communal witness to the Gospel message of love of God and neighbor and service to the world, especially the poor and marginalized. (Miller, 2006, pp. 25–26).

2. CONTRIBUTING TO THE EVANGELIZING MISSION OF THE CHURCH

By reason of its educational activity, Catholic schools participate directly and in a privileged way in the evangelizing mission of the church. (*The Catholic School*, 9; *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*, 5, 11; *The Religious Dimensions of Education in a Catholic School*, 33). As an ecclesial entity where faith, culture, and life are brought into harmony, the Catholic school should be a place of real and specified pastoral ministry in communion with the local Bishop. (*The Catholic School*, 44; *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*, 14; *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*, 34). The environment in Catholic schools should express the signs of Catholic culture, physically, and visibly (*The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*; Miller, 2006, p. 40).

3. DISTINGUISHED BY EXCELLENCE

Church documents, history, and practices, supported by Canon Law, establish that first and foremost a Catholic school is characterized by excellence. Consistent with the defining characteristics, Catholic schools should implement on-going processes and structures and gather evidence to ensure excellence in every aspect of its programs, life, and activities. (*Gravissimum Educationis* 8 and 9; *Code of Canon Law*, Canon 806 #2).

4. COMMITTED TO EDUCATE THE WHOLE CHILD

Catholic school education is rooted in the conviction that human beings have a transcendent destiny, and that education for the whole person must form the spiritual, intellectual, physical, psychological, social, moral, aesthetic and religious capacities of each child. Catholic schools should develop and implement academic, co-curricular, faith-formation, and service/ministry programs to educate the whole child in all these dimensions. (*The Catholic School*, 29).

5. STEEPED IN A CATHOLIC WORLDVIEW

Catholic education aims at the integral formation of the human person, which includes “preparation for professional life, formation of ethical and social awareness, developing awareness of the transcendental, and religious education”. (*The Catholic School*, 31). All curriculum and instruction in a Catholic school should foster: the desire to seek wisdom and truth, the preference for social justice, the discipline to become self-learners, the capacity to recognize ethical and moral grounding for behavior, and the responsibility to transform and enrich the world with Gospel values. The Catholic school should avoid the error that its distinctiveness rests solely on its religious education program. (Miller, 2006, pp. 43–45, 52).

6. SUSTAINED BY GOSPEL WITNESS

Catholic schools pay attention to the vocation of teachers and their participation in the Church's evangelizing mission. (The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, 19; Lay Catholics in Schools, 37). A Catholic educator is a role model for students and gives testimony by his or her life and commitment to mission. (Benedict XVI, June, 2005; Miller, 2006, p. 53). As much as possible, Catholic schools should 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, including participation in the school's commitment to social justice and evangelization. (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, National Directory for Catechesis, 231).

7. SHAPED BY COMMUNION AND COMMUNITY

Catholic school education places an emphasis on the school as community—an educational community of persons and a genuine community of faith. (Lay Catholics in Schools, 22, 41). Catholic schools should do everything they can to promote genuine trust and collaboration among teachers, with parents as the primary educators of their children, and with governing body members to foster appreciation of different gifts that build up a learning and faith community and strengthen academic excellence. (Lay Catholics in Schools, 78). The Catholic school should pay especially close attention to the quality of interpersonal relations between teachers and students, ensuring that the student is seen as a person whose intellectual growth is harmonized with spiritual, religious, emotional, and social growth. (The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, 18).

8. ACCESSIBLE TO ALL STUDENTS

By reason of their evangelizing mission, Catholic schools should be available to all people who desire a Catholic school education for their children. (Gravissimum Educationis, 6; Code of Canon Law, Canons 793 #2; Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools in the Third Millennium, Introduction). Catholic schools in concert with the Catholic community should do everything in their power to manage available resources and seek innovative options to ensure that Catholic school education is geographically, programmatically, physically, and financially accessible.

9. ESTABLISHED BY THE EXPRESSED AUTHORITY OF THE BISHOP

Canon Law states, "Pastors of souls have the duty of making all possible arrangements so that all the faithful may avail themselves of a Catholic education." (Code of Canon Law, Canon 794). Bishops need to put forward the mission of Catholic schools, support and enhance the work of Catholic schools, and see that the education in the schools is based on principles of Catholic doctrine. (John Paul II, Pastores Gregis, 52). Catholic schools have a formal and defined relationship with the Bishop guided by a spirituality of ecclesial communion, and should work to establish a relationship marked by mutual trust, close cooperation, continuing dialogue, and respect for the Bishop's legitimate authority. (Code of Canon Law, Canon 803 #1 and #3; Miller, 2006, p. 33).

SUMMARY OF STANDARDS

MISSION AND CATHOLIC IDENTITY

Standard 1:

An excellent Catholic school is guided and driven by a clearly communicated mission that embraces a Catholic identity rooted in Gospel values, centered on the Eucharist, and committed to faith formation, academic excellence and service.

Standard 2:

An excellent Catholic school adhering to mission provides a rigorous academic program for religious studies and catechesis in the Catholic faith, set within a total academic curriculum that integrates faith, culture, and life.

Standard 3

An excellent Catholic school adhering to mission provides opportunities outside the classroom for student faith formation, participation in liturgical and communal prayer, and action in service of social justice.

Standard 4

An excellent Catholic school adhering to mission provides opportunities for adult faith formation and action in service of social justice.

GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

Standard 5

An excellent Catholic school has a governing body (person or persons) which recognizes and respects the role(s) of the appropriate and legitimate authorities, and exercises responsible decision making (authoritative, consultative, advisory) in collaboration with the leadership team for development and oversight of the school's fidelity to mission, academic excellence, and operational vitality.

Standard 6

An excellent Catholic school has a qualified leader/leadership team empowered by the governing body to realize and implement the school's mission and vision.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Standard 7

An excellent Catholic school has a clearly articulated, rigorous curriculum aligned with relevant standards, 21st century skills, and Gospel values, implemented through effective instruction.

Standard 8

An excellent Catholic school uses school-wide assessment methods and practices to document student learning and program effectiveness, to make student performances transparent, and to inform the continuous review of curriculum and the improvement of instructional practices.

Standard 9

An excellent Catholic school provides programs and services aligned with the mission to enrich the academic program and support the development of student and family life.

OPERATIONAL VITALITY

Standard 10

An excellent Catholic school provides a feasible three to five year financial plan that includes both current and projected budgets and is the result of a collaborative process, emphasizing faithful stewardship.

Standard 11

An excellent Catholic school operates in accord with published human resource/personnel policies developed in compliance with (arch)diocesan policies and/or religious congregation sponsorship policies, which affect all staff (clergy, religious women and men, laity and volunteers) and provide clarity for responsibilities, expectations and accountability.

Standard 12

An excellent Catholic school develops and maintains a facilities, equipment, and technology management plan designed to continuously support the implementation of the educational mission of the school.

Standard 13

An excellent Catholic school enacts a comprehensive plan, based on a compelling mission, for institutional advancement through communications, marketing, enrollment management, and development.