

Education Committee Handbook



Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Superior are a mission of the Church entrusted by Jesus Christ to instill Catholic faith and morals in our students. Within community, our schools prepare students spiritually, academically, and physically to proclaim and live out the Good News in preparation for eternal life.



Diocese of Superior
Office of Catholic Formation - Schools
July 2008
Revised August 2018

INTRODUCTION

Education committee membership is one way that the laity share in the teaching ministry of the Church. What education committee members do is crucial to the mission of Catholic education.

– Mary Angela Schaugnessy, SCN, JD, PhD

The National Directory of Catechesis directs the formation of a parish catechetical committee by stating...

*If the pastor so chooses, he may establish a commission to assist him with his catechetical responsibilities. **No single model of a representative commission, however, will be suited to every parish.** Different circumstances in parishes require different organizational forms. ...No matter what organizational form is chosen, the various educational and catechetical components of a parish program of evangelization and pastoral care should be developed in harmony with another and with the total program of pastoral care planned by the parish. ...The members of the parish catechetical commission or committee should represent the diversity in age, ability, and the cultural, racial, ethnic, social and economic conditions present in the parish. They should receive appropriate training and pastoral formation that help them understand the Church's universal mission, the overall goals of the parish, and the catechetical priorities within the pastoral plan.*

Parish catechetical efforts should be coordinated with those of neighboring parishes, clusters or parishes, deaneries and regions. As much as possible, parishes should share resources and avoid the duplication of catechetical services, especially so that the catechetical needs of poor or otherwise disadvantaged groups can be met. (Pages 255-256)

This handbook is meant to be a resource for in-servicing, organization and maintaining Education Committees with parishes that have schools. **Along with the directives and policies of Canon Law and the Diocese of Superior, this handbook states the recommended format, development and procedures of an Education Committee.**

Young people are a valued treasure and the future leaders of our Church. It is the responsibility of the entire Church community – bishops, priests, deacons, religious and laity – to continue to strive towards the goal of making our Catholic elementary and secondary schools available, accessible, and affordable to all Catholic parents and their children.

(Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools in the Third Millennium, USCCB, 2005)

COMMITTEE GUIDELINES

PURPOSE

The Education Committee is responsible for developing awareness that the entire parish community has the responsibility for promoting the educational and formational aspects of the Church's mission.

The Education Committees of the parish – both school and religious education, under the direction of and in collaboration with the Parish Pastoral Council, coordinates and integrates all aspects of Catholic education and formation, i.e. children through adult, Catholic and public school children alike. The Education Committees of the parish – both school and religious education, are to *foster cooperation, coordination and communication among all groups and individuals involved in the educational and formational ministries of the parish*. At the same time the committees respect the roles and responsibilities of the parish employees as defined in their job descriptions.

The Education Committee ensures that those responsible for responding to the various educational needs of the parishioners (1) accomplish their ministry well, (2) are provided the necessary tools and resources, and (3) that they carry out the overall purpose of education and formation.

FUNCTION

The function of the Education Committee is to:

- (1) Carry out responsibilities delegated to it by the pastor and pastoral council.
- (2) Assist the pastor and school principal in carrying out their leadership roles in the parish education and formation programs.

Enactment of policy is the responsibility of the pastor. Just as the pastoral council is a consultative body, so too, *the Education Committee is consultative*. Neither the pastoral council and its committees nor the Education Committee can make decisions binding for the school without the approval of the pastor and the principal. A consultative committee is one which collaborates with the pastor, principal and pastoral council in the planning process. This is in keeping with the shared decision making modeled at the diocesan level of the Catholic Church through the consultative status of the Diocesan Presbyteral Council, Diocesan Pastoral Council and Diocesan Finance Council.

Consultation also means that decisions will not be made in major matters related to the education and formation programs until and unless the Education Committee has been consulted.

The Education Committee will likely be consulted in the following areas concerning the school:

- A. *Planning* – Establishment, formulation and review of the school Mission Statement and Wisconsin Religious and Independent School Accreditation (WRISA) strategic plan.
- B. *Finances* – Developing long and short range plans and means to finance ongoing educational programs including tuition, parish subsidy, development, fundraising, to develop the annual school budget and monthly advice in the allocation of resources in the school budgets.

- C. *Development, including Public Relations and Marketing* – Includes understanding the school’s mission, a commitment to the vision, the involvement of people, the development and presentation of a case statement to the public, and finally the acquisition of funds to bring the WRISA plan to fruition.
- D. *Evaluation* – Determining whether WRISA long-range strategic plans are being met and determination of the school committee’s own effectiveness. The committee is not involved in evaluating individual staff members, the principal, personnel or students.
- E. *Selection and Appointment of the Principal* – Participating in a consultative role according to the policies of the diocese and parish in determining the principal.

RELATION TO PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

The parish Education Committee is a *standing committee of the pastoral council*. The responsibilities of the committee should be specified in writing. Before implementation, all recommended actions developed by the parish Education Committee are to be conveyed to the pastoral council for review, unless otherwise directed by the pastor and the parish pastoral council.

RELATION TO PARISH FINANCE COUNCIL

The parish Education Committee should *convey recommendations* for the annual school budget in a timely fashion to the pastoral council. The *principal, in collaboration with the pastor prepares the proposed school budget*. The budget proposal is submitted to the parish Education Committee for review and comment prior to the submission to the pastoral council. The budget proposal shall ultimately be incorporated into the budget submitted by the parish pastoral council to the parish finance council.

RELATION TO HOME AND SCHOOL ORGANIZATION

The president of the Home and School Organization should be an ex-officio member of the parish Education Committee.

RELATION TO THE DIOCESE OF SUPERIOR

The program and actions of the parish school and parish Education Committee should, at all times, be in accord with diocesan policy.

RELATION TO PARISH AND SCHOOL EMPLOYEES

Due to conflict of interest, it is recommended that no parish or school employees be on the parish Education Committee. If, by direction of the pastor, this is the case, these members shall be ex-officio. The parish Education Committee may recommend structuring of staff within the school, but have no involvement in the evaluation process of these employees.

MEMBERSHIP

Members of the parish Education Committee are appointed, with pastoral approval, by the chair of the pastoral council. The parish Education Committee may consist of representatives for: educational aspects of parish, evangelization, adult education, religious education, school, missionary activities, ecumenism, sacramental preparation, pre-school, special education, vacation bible school, bible studies, and spiritual formation and prayer groups.

Members of the parish Education Committee are to meet the following criteria:

- A. *Interest in and commitment to parish faith formation and the educational missions and Catholic identity as a part of total Christian formation.*
- B. *Available to attend meetings and periodic in-service programs and to participate in committee work.*
- C. *Maintain high levels of integrity and confidentiality.*
- D. *Able to deal with situations as they relate to the good of the entire school and parish community.*
- E. *Be a credible witness of the Catholic faith to the school and parish community and beyond.*

VACANCIES

If a vacancy on the parish Education Committee develops, the *pastor is to make the appointment of a replacement* after due consultation with the pastoral council and principal within one month of the vacancy's occurrence. The appointment is effective until the next election of pastoral council members.

In the event that a person is appointed to fill a vacancy during the year, appropriate in-service shall be provided by the pastor of his designee prior to the person becoming a member of the parish Education Committee.

IN-SERVICE

All new members of the parish Education Committee are expected to attend a parish Education Committee meeting prior to the beginning of their term. All members of the parish Education Committee are to *receive annual in-service* at the first meeting held after July 1 of each fiscal year.

OFFICERS

Committee Chair responsibilities:

- Jointly with the pastor and principal, set regular meeting agendas.
- Insure that an accurate recording of the minutes of each committee meeting is prepared. The chair may appoint a secretary to assist in these duties.
- Make sure the agenda and minutes are:
 - › Transmitted to the parish pastoral council, pastor and principal.
 - › Filed in the school office.
 - › Submitted to the Superintendent of Schools for the diocese.

MEETINGS

The parish Education Committee should meet monthly beginning in July or August. Task forces of the committee meet as necessary. Special parish Education Committee meetings can be called by the pastor, principal or committee chair (with approval of the pastor).

The agenda and written committee reports should be available to members at least one week prior to the regularly scheduled committee meetings.

In the event that a *closed meeting* is required, any teachers or other employees that are ad-hoc members, other than the principal or pastor, should be excused from the meeting. *Minutes must be taken* during the session and placed in the file as confidential and not disseminated to the public. A summary of any decisions or listing of the topic of discussion should be put in the general minutes. This will ensure accurate accountability for anything decided within this closed session.

RULES OF ORDER

Consensus-building is the appropriate mode of decision making for the parish Education Committee. Consensus means that all committee members agree to support the decisions which appear to be the best, under the present circumstances, for the greatest number of people.

In order to provide the best consultation, the consensus method of decision making is recommended. When the parish Education Committee is unable to reach a consensus, the minutes should report the different positions and appropriate reasons to the parish pastoral council.

When the pastor is present at the meeting and concurs with decisions that are reached, the parish Education Committee minutes should indicate his concurrence when they are conveyed to the parish pastoral council.

When the pastor is unable to attend a parish Education Committee meeting, he should receive the minutes and have the opportunity to comment on issues prior to the minutes' distribution. His signature on the minutes constitutes concurrence. The minutes are then conveyed to the parish pastoral council.

TASK FORCES (SUB-COMMITTEES)

The parish Education Committee may choose to operate with task forces which could include:

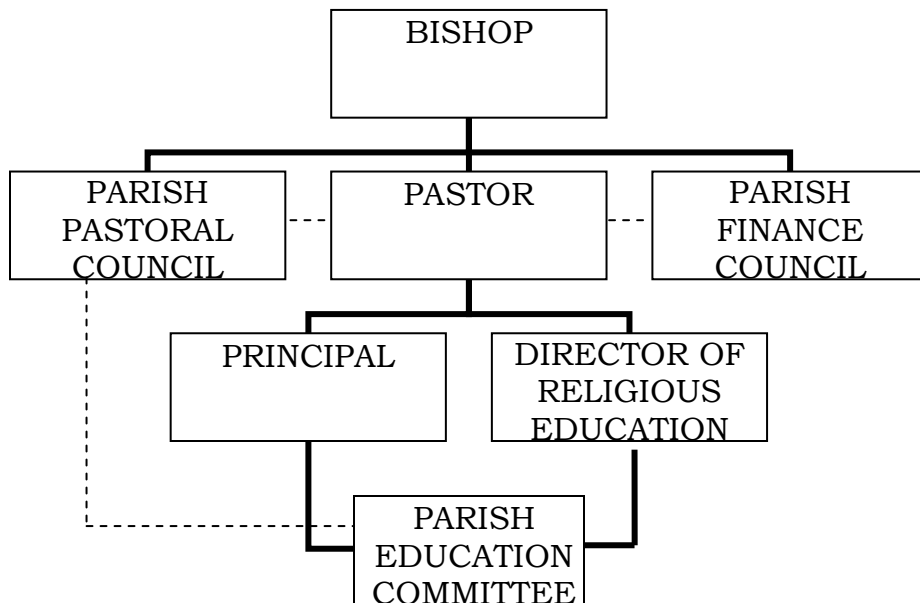
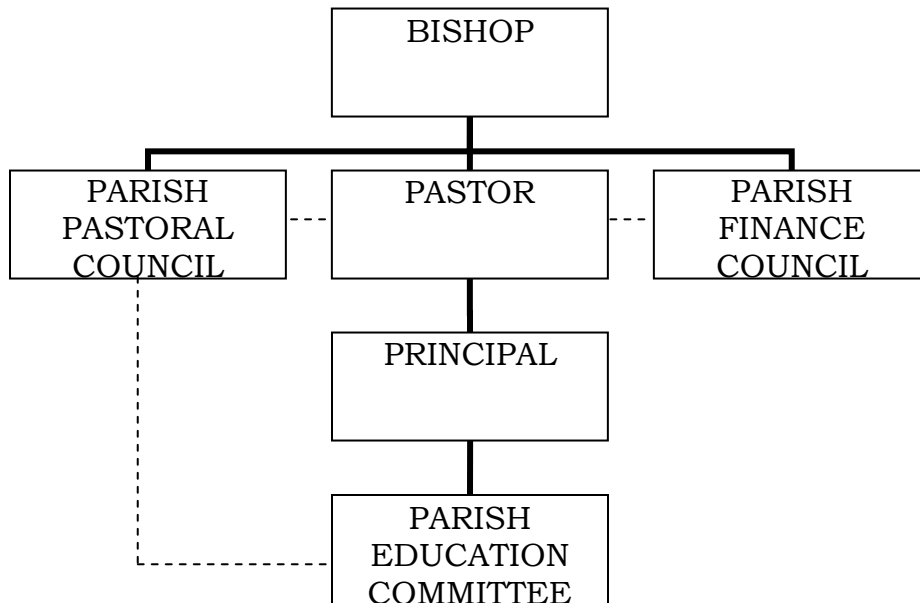
Planning Task Force - The functions of this task force are to establish and annually review the school mission statement and to inaugurate and monitor the WRISA long-range strategic planning process for the school.

Finance Task Force – The functions of this task force are to work with the principal and pastor to develop and review the annual long and short-range plans, develop the budget and find the means to finance same, and present regular monthly school reports to the full parish Education Committee.

Physical Facilities and Grounds Task Force – The functions of this task force are to assist in developing and monitoring a maintenance plan.

Development and Public Relations Task Force – The function of this task force is to develop and work the overall development plan of the school: case statement, marketing, recruitment, retention, and public relations.

PARISH EDUCATION COMMITTEE MODELS¹



¹ CACE/NABE Governance Task Force. *A Primer on Educational Governance in the Catholic Church*. NCEA. 2001.

OUTLINE FOR PARISH EDUCATION COMMITTEE BY-LAWS²

Parish Name

- Article I: Name of Organization
- Article II: Purpose and Function
- Article III: Relationships with other groups
- Article IV: Membership
State requirements for membership, consecutive terms and selection process
- Article V: Nominations and Selection of Members
Provide rules for selection, length of terms, reasons for removal of a member, and provisions for filling vacancies
- Article VI: Officers
State what officers the committee is to have, their duties, manner of appointment and term of office, re-appointment rules and consecutive terms
- Article VII: Meetings
Indicate schedule of meetings, quorum needed, presiding person if chairperson is absent, notification of agenda before meeting, rules of procedure and decision-making process, open meetings, minutes, recording and dissemination of committee decisions, provisions for closed session, provision for suspension of committee rules for operation
- Article VIII: Standing and Ad Hoc Task Forces
Specify the functions of committees, the appointment of chairpersons and criteria for membership, the purpose and responsibilities of the committee, and process for reporting to the parish Education Committee
- Article IX: Rules of Order
Method used that will ensure maximum participation resulting in consensus, if possible, and thereby avoiding the win-lose situation. Procedure to be used in decision making when pastor is not present to participate in the meeting

Signature of Pastor

Date of Approval

² CACE/NABE Governance Task Force. *A Primer on Educational Governance in the Catholic Church*. NCEA. 2001.

Many people confuse the responsibilities of a public school board with that of any school board. The Catholic education committee has a very different role than its public school counterpart.

PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARD

Public schools are governed by elected or appointed boards whose source of authority comes from the citizens through American democratic processes. Public education is a function of the fifty separate states. The general assembly of each state has jurisdictional authority for public schools within the state in accord with its constitutional and court rulings.

- › Derive power and authority from the state
- › Generate “law”/policy
- › The chief supreme educational authority for their community
- › Oversee education
- › Represent lay involvement
- › Provide a structure for public accountability
- › Provide a way for parents and community to influence vital policy issues affecting the schools
- › Set goals
- › Select Superintendent of Schools

Functions:

- › Discretionary (judgmental acts)
- › Ministerial (service)

Responsible for:

- › Policy
- › Budget
- › Employees
- › Students
- › Programs

CATHOLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The authority for Catholic schools is vested in the diocesan bishop and parish corporation which are responsible for ensuring that Catholic schools are organized and administered in accord with church and civil law. Thus Catholic educational committees are not jurisdictional.

- › The board is constituted by the pastor or bishop to govern
- › The pastor or bishop clearly specifies in writing the areas in which the board has responsibility for governance
- › Consultative in areas of school governance: school specific policy, budget/finance, diocesan policy
- › Ensure the Catholicity of the school and religious education.
- › Ensure the educational administrator is qualified
- › Consultative to the bishop in areas reserved for the decision of the bishop

EDUCATION AND THE LAW

Catholic elementary and secondary education programs are subject to both ecclesiastical and civil law.

CANON LAW³

The Code of Canon Law provides a framework for governance within the church. In the area of education, the code prescribes very general norms and leaves the establishment of specific laws and rules for the local churches. There are two basic systems in the church's approach to governance:

- A. *Executive* – the responsibility is placed in the hands of an individual who is supposed to work with other people in a collaborative or consultative manner. The individual, however, is responsible to take the initiative, come to the final decisions, order the implementation, and hold people accountable for carrying out the decision.
- B. *Collegial* – the same responsibilities are vest in a group, for example, the chapter of a religious congregation, which counts on individuals to carry out tasks.

Educational governance by the diocese and parish generally function out of the executive system.

Summary of Canon Law that pertains to schools are:

Can. 515 §1 - A parish is entrusted to a pastor by the authority of the bishop.

Can. 519 – The pastor carries out the functions of teaching, sanctifying, and governing with the assistance of lay members of the parish.

Can 536 §1 – A pastoral council is to be established in each parish.

§2 – A pastoral council possesses a consultative vote only and is governed by the norms established by the diocesan bishop.

Can 537 – In each parish there is to be a finance council.

Can. 796 §1 - Among the means to foster education, the Christian faithful are to hold schools in esteem; schools are the principal assistance to parents in fulfilling the function of education.

§2 - Parents must cooperate closely with the teachers of the schools to which they entrust their children to be educated; moreover, teachers in fulfilling their duty are to collaborate very closely with parents, who are to be heard willingly and for whom associations or meetings are to be established and highly esteemed.

Can. 797 - Parents must possess a true freedom in choosing schools.

Can. 798 - Parents are to entrust their children to those schools which provide a Catholic education.

Can. 800 §1 - The Church has the right to establish and direct schools of any discipline, type, and level.

§2 - The Christian faithful are to foster Catholic schools, assisting in their establishment and maintenance.

Can. 803 §1 - A Catholic school is under the direction of the local bishop.

§2 - The instruction and education in a Catholic school must be grounded in the principles of Catholic doctrine; teachers are to be outstanding in correct doctrine and integrity of life.

§3 - Even if it is in fact Catholic, no school is to bear the name Catholic school without the consent of the bishop.

Can. 804 §1 - The Catholic religious instruction and education are subject to the authority of the Church. The conference of bishops issue general norms and for diocesan bishop regulates and watches over them.

§2 - The local ordinary is to be concerned that those who are designated teachers of religious instruction in schools, even in non-Catholic ones, are outstanding in correct doctrine, the witness of a Christian life, and teaching skill.

Can. 805 - For his own diocese, the bishop has the right to appoint or approve teachers of religion and even to remove them or demand that they be removed if a reason of religion or morals requires it.

³ CACE/NABE Governance Task Force. *A Primer on Educational Governance in the Catholic Church*. NCEA. 2001.

Can. 806 §1 - The diocesan bishop has the right to watch over and visit the Catholic schools in his territory. He also issues policies which pertain to the general regulation of Catholic schools.

§2 - Directors of Catholic schools under the authority of the bishop are to ensure that the instruction which is given in the schools is at least as academically distinguished as that in the other schools of the area.

CIVIL LAW⁴:

Students and teachers in Catholic schools, and in all private schools, are not protected by Federal Constitutional Law because they are in private agencies.

State Constitutional law, however, may apply if:

1. state action can be found to be so pervasive within the school that the school can be considered a state agent. (i.e. an institution's acceptance of government monies; the tax exempt status of the private institution; education as a quasi state function; and state involvement with the school through accreditation or similar procedures and statutory requirements with which the school complies)
2. a compelling state interest, loosely defined as an overwhelming need for an action, can be shown.

Federal and state statutes and regulations govern the public school and may govern the Catholic school as well. Failure to comply with reasonable regulations can result in the imposition of sanctions.

Common law is the general universal law of the land. It is developed through court decisions over hundreds of years. Due process or fairness considerations can be considered part of the common law. While Catholic schools are not required to provide Constitutional due process to students and teachers, administrators are required to exercise fairness in their interactions with students and teachers.

- a. At minimum, a person accused of an infraction will be told of the charges and allowed to respond to them before a reasonable party.
- b. The Gospel requires that parents and students be treated fairly in Catholic schools.
- c. Parents and students have the right to demand fair treatment.

In Catholic Schools, contract law is the predominant governing law. The five basic elements of a contract are considered to be (1) *mutual assent* by (2) *legally competent parties* for (3) *consideration* to (4) *subject matter* that is legal and in a (5) *form of agreement* which is legal.

Tort Law⁵:

Tort = a private or civil wrong or injury... for which the court will provide a remedy in the form of an action for damages.

Corporal Punishment and other Types of Abuse

⁴ Shaughnessy, Mary Angela, SCN, JD, PhD. *The Law and Catholic Schools: A Guide to Legal Issues for the Third Millennium*. NCEA. 2005.

⁵ Shaughnessy, Mary Angela, SCN, JD, PhD. *The Law and Catholic Schools: A Guide to Legal Issues for the Third Millennium*. NCEA. 2005.

Unless corporal punishment is prohibited in all schools by state law, Catholic schools may use it. In the state of Wisconsin, it is not prohibited; however, the Diocese of Superior does not allow the use of corporal punishment.

As a mandated reporter, the teacher, principal or pastor is responsible to present the information regarding abuse to social services or law enforcement. It is not their job to determine if abuse has occurred.

The school and diocese must do everything in its power to prevent abuse of students by persons working within the school and parish – therefore all claims of abuse are taken very seriously and background checks are required.

Search and Seizure

Catholic school educators are not bound by the Fourth Amendment search and seizure requirements, but the school or teacher can be subject to a suit for damages if a student alleges harm as a result of an unreasonable search.

Searching a student should require more cause than searching a locker. Private schools could be subject to tort suits if harm is alleged to have been done to a student because of an unreasonable search.

Defamation

Defamation is the utterance of words in spoken or written form that are detrimental to the subject's reputation – almost anything negative said about someone could be construed as defamatory.

Privacy and reputation are two serious legal issues. Both students and staff members expect that information concerning them will be revealed only to those with a right to know.

All involved in the educational ministry of the school should refrain from gossip or unnecessary derogatory remarks about any members of the school community.

When making statements or writing entries in records, a person should restrict statements to pertinent facts. Committees should insure that there are record-keeping policies in place that: (1) limit contents to records to what is absolutely necessary; (2) provide for periodic culling of older records; and (3) limit access to records to appropriate persons.

It is generally held that teachers have legal as well as moral rights to see whatever is in their files. Only school administrators have access to teacher files. Committee members have no legal right of access to student or teacher records.

Negligence

Negligence is the unintentional doing or not doing of something which wrongfully causes injury to another.

Case law indicates that teachers and administrators are expected to act as reasonable persons.

There are four elements necessary to constitute a finding of negligence:

1. The person charged must have had a duty in the situation.
2. The person charged must have been in violation of duties.
3. The violation of duties must be the proximate cause of an injury.
4. Someone had to have been injured.

A common legal standard judging supervision cases is, “the younger the child chronologically or mentally, the greater the standard of care expected.” Committee members will not be responsible for actual supervision, but are responsible for seeing that appropriate policies and procedures for supervision are in place and are being implemented.

The best defense in a negligence suit is a reasonable attempt to provide for the safety of those entrusted to their care by the development and implementation of rules and policies. The reasonable committee is one that ensure that administrators supervise teachers in their implementation of rules and policies.

DIOCESAN POLICIES

The Department of Catholic Formation – Office of Schools has made available a school administrative manual for Catholic schools and their parishes in the Diocese of Superior. This manual is a reference and a collection of facts, policies, regulations, forms, procedures, guidelines and suggestions that affect administrative, supervisory and leadership responsibilities in the schools. The manual provides answers to questions and decisions in the schools and provides all administrators with the same information. All explanations, guidelines and regulations in the manual are subordinate to diocesan policies.

CREATING SAFE AND SACRED PLACES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

In early 2003, the U.S. Bishops published the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, titled, *Promised to Protect, Pledged to Heal*. In order to fulfill the U.S. Bishop’s Charter requirements, all parishes are expected to take the steps directed by the Diocese of Superior to provide a safe environment for children and youth. This will necessitate providing appropriate safe environment training to catechists, teachers and employees who have not been previously trained as well as ongoing formation to those who have been trained. It will also require ongoing training of children and youth to safeguard from abuse.

In order to provide a safe environment for children and young people; background checks must be completed for all employees and volunteers who are around minors.

CATECHETICAL CERTIFICATION

Forming Effective Disciples is a process which officially recognizes the qualities and experiences of individuals in education and formation within the Catholic faith to teach and lead in their respective ministries. Everyone who is involved in education and formation of children and adults in Catholic schools and parishes needs to participate in this program. There are two levels of formation – foundational is provided both on-line or on-site using Echoes of Faith 3.0 and elevated is an online program through Dayton University.