



Archdiocese of Seattle Office for Catholic Schools

Faculty Handbooks

To help you as you review and revise your handbooks, some with thoughts about faculty/staff handbooks. Many of these ideas are taken from *SCHOOL HANDBOOKS: SOME LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS*, by Sister Mary Angela Shaughnessy, SCN, Ph.D. Here are some questions to consider as you review and revise your handbook:

1. **Philosophy:** Include the philosophy and/or mission statement at the beginning of the handbook answer the questions, “What do we as Catholic educators say that we are doing in this school?” Read your philosophy critically. Ask yourself if any of the policies that are in your handbook are inconsistent with your philosophy. Courts will expect that they are consistent.
2. **Accreditation:** Goals and Student Expectations
3. **General Information:** timelines, dates, etc.
 - School hours (when must teachers arrive and depart)
 - Information about how to learn of school delay due to weather or other difficulty
 - Bell schedule
 - Calendar
 - Early dismissal
 - Immunization records
 - School Mass schedule (noting which class is leading)
 - Staff Development responsibilities and opportunities
 - Library policies and procedure
4. **Instruction of Students:** The handbook should include a job description of a Catholic School teacher. There is a copy in the Catholic Schools Policy and Procedure Manual. Does the handbook discuss the instruction of students:
 - what is to be taught;
 - who is available for teacher consultation;
 - amounts of time given to seatwork and independent study;
 - retention of students – criteria and process;
 - minimum and maximum times for homework assignments;
 - guidelines for tutoring students outside the school day
5. **Supervision of Students:** supervision of students should include
 - supervision is a mental as well as physical presence, conscious, active supervision as opposed to standing talking with someone or correcting papers.
 - procedures for leaving students unattended (in emergencies only);
 - expectations of students when the teacher must be absent;

- building wide behavior expectations;
- procedures for reporting and recording accidents;

6. **Record Keeping/Grading:** Have these areas been covered:

- criteria and the factors to be considered in grading;
- definition of letter grades and numerical equivalencies;
- requirement that teachers keep grade books and lesson plan books on file either in the office or in their homes as long as they are employed at school
- statement for requesting a consideration of a grade change, and time allowed for this process;
- guidelines for filling out attendance records, reporting absences to the office, and for permanent retention of these records;
- policy regarding electronic record;
- policy regarding parents requesting to view their student's files;
- policies for maintaining student permanent records;
- guidelines for parent / teacher conferences (students included?)
- guidelines for teachers in maintaining their own professional portfolio;
- guidelines for recognizing student health challenges and procedures for medical alerts

7. **Professionalism:** A statement reminding teachers of their obligation to act in a manner that is professional, loyal, keeping confidences, and to live a lifestyle within the moral guidelines of the Catholic Church.

- Guidelines for teacher use of cell phones, gum chewing and/or smoking, having food or drink in the classroom;
- Professional dress for teachers
- Policy for Contractual Responsibilities:
 - State Certification and renewal
 - Catechetical Certification
 - Background Clearance
 - Safe Environment Workshop and updates

8. **Non-teaching Duties:** Description of expectations for non-teaching duties:

- procedures for accidents;
- cafeteria duty;
- carpool duty or recess supervision;
- procedures for handling money collected in the classroom;
- review of policies for clean – up of body fluids;
- class and teacher participation in assemblies;
- guidelines for class parties;
- procedures for : fire drills, earthquake drills, intruder alert;
- expectations for maintaining common spaces; store rooms, faculty lounge, work rooms, etc.

9. **Discipline:** Is there a school-wide discipline policy?

- When does the teacher turn a discipline situation to the principal;
- Procedures for alerting parents;

10. **Field Trips:** Refer to the Catholic Schools Policy and Procedure Manual (2.8) School Sponsored Activities and Field Trips. Include guidelines for activities and expectations for drivers.

11. **Attendance at Meetings:** A list should be given of the meetings and events (outside the school day where teachers are expected to be in attendance. The administrator may reserve the right to require attendance at other meetings that come up during the year, given advance notice.

12. **Supervision and Evaluation of Teachers:** Give teachers have a clear understanding of how they will be supervised and evaluated.

- who will evaluate and supervise;
- what format will be used for formal observations;
- frequency of evaluation;
- definition of formal and informal supervision; (The principal reserves the right to observe classes at unscheduled times.)
- areas in addition to teaching skills that will be included in evaluation (the teacher will be evaluated on how s/he is supportive of school policy, looks after the safety of the children, cooperates with staff and administration, etc.
- what documentation becomes part of the permanent file;
- what options the teacher has to respond in writing to an evaluation.

13. **Personnel Policies:** Include a reminder that faculty are to follow the personnel policies in the CATHOLIC SCHOOLS POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL. While the Archdiocesan manuals address many of the personnel issues, it may be necessary to define some local policies. (For instance, the school allows personal days, must there be a request ahead before taking the day? Are there certain dates the personal days may not be used?)

- Procedures for requesting a leave or sick day;
- Procedures for tracking leave and maintaining records;
- Family Medical Leave policy;
- Outside employment;
- Hours expected to be at work;
- Leaving the building during the school day

14. **Catholic Witness:** Include a statement such as “All teachers must uphold the teachings of the Catholic Church. Failure to do so may result in dismissal.”

15. **Grievance Procedures:** These are outlined in the Catholic Schools Manual. Either reproduce this in your handbook, or indicate where teachers can find these procedures.

16. **Contracts and Work Agreements:** Include a copy of the Contract form; stipulate that “the contract is a year-to-year contract which grants no expectation of continuing employment.” Include a copy of the Work Agreement, for non-certificated staff.

17. **Forms:** Include samples of whatever forms are used in your building. This insures that teachers have easy access and are clear about what forms are official in the building.

18. **Technology and Equipment:** Have clear guidelines for staff using technology.

- Electronic mail and Internet Use Agreement Form is included and is to be signed by all faculty
- Procedures for using electronic equipment;
- Procedures for and limits on using copy machines;
- Guidelines for supervision of students using technology; (including cell phones)
- Use of email for communicating with parents;
- Use of computer for personal reasons –
- Guidelines for using copy machines, passwords and limits

19. **Classroom management expectations:** Policies providing guidance on teacher day-to-day tasks and maintaining orderliness.

- Bulletin Boards: frequency of change and topics displayed;
- Faculty communication expectations (example: teacher bulletin published on Friday afternoon, teacher is responsible for knowing the contents);
- Procedures of principal reviewing lesson plans;
- Procedures for materials left for substitute for calling for a substitute teacher;
- Maintenance of Classroom space
- Procedures for handling money coming into the classroom
- Procedures for students accessing lockers
- Procedures for issuing and monitoring textbooks in the classroom
- Procedures for Classroom parties
- Working with Volunteers

20. **What Else?** There are other areas that could be included in the handbooks..

End of year procedures

Job descriptions of teacher, department chair, vice-principal, etc.

Student progress reports

Building security/ keys --alarms

Lesson plans

Parent/teacher communication

Classroom maintenance

Guidelines for student written work

I recommend that there be a specific note in your handbook, reminding teachers that the Faculty/Staff Handbook and the Parent/Student Handbook are part of the contract with the teacher.