

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CONCERNING HUMAN SEXUALITY AND SEXUAL IDENTITY

Purpose

The Catholic school is committed to providing a safe environment that allows students to flourish academically, physically, and spiritually. Catholic schools are obliged to provide an education and resources consistent with Catholic teaching. The starting point for Catholic education is a deeply held understanding that affirms the God-given irrevocable dignity of every human person.

Catholic teaching permeates and shapes the ethos of Catholic schools. Informed by Catholic teaching, these Guiding Principles shall inform the creation of policies, handbooks, statements, employee agreements, training for employees, and the approach to accompaniment in the Catholic schools of the Diocese of [insert], thus ensuring that the immeasurable dignity of every child is protected and respected, particularly as it relates to foundational beliefs of the Catholic Church:

- God created each person body and soul “in His own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:27). The dignity of each person and the source of his or her most important identity is found in this creation in the image and likeness of God (CCC §364).
- God uses the body to reveal to each person his or her sexual identity as male or female. A person’s embrace of his or her God-given sexual identity is an essential part of living a fulfilled relationship with God, with oneself, and with each other (*Laudato Si* §155).
- The harmonious integration of a person’s sexual identity with his or her sex is an expression of the inner unity and reality of the human person made body and soul in the image and likeness of God (CCC §364-65).
- The physical, moral, and spiritual differences between men and women are equal and complementary. The flourishing of family life and society depend in part on how this complementarity and equality are lived out (CCC §2333-34).
- All students and families deserve interactions with Catholic school communities that are marked by respect, charity, and the truth about human dignity and God’s love (*Deus Caritas Est* §20).

APPLICATION OF GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The aforementioned Guiding Principles are practically applied in Catholic schools. Catholic schools in the Diocese of [insert] will relate to each student in a way that is respectful of and consistent with each student’s God-given sexual identity and biological sex. To this end, below are some examples of how these Guiding Principles apply to organizations that teach children and youth in the name of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of [insert].

1. All school policies, procedures, resources, employee training, and assistance given to families will be consistent with the Church's teaching on the dignity of the human person, including human sexuality. Reflective of a commitment to a culture of transparency and understanding, these policies will be made available in writing to members of the school community by way of inclusion in relevant handbooks, agreements, and statements.
2. Student's name and pronoun usage will correspond to his/her sex (see definitions).
3. Student access to facilities and overnight accommodations will align with his/her sex.
4. Eligibility for single-sex curricular and extracurricular activities will be based on the sex of the child.
5. Expressions of a student's sexual identity are prohibited when they cause disruption or confusion regarding the Church's teaching on human sexuality.
6. Students who attend and employees who work at a Catholic school can expect that the school acknowledges that God has created each person as a unity of body and soul, as male or female, and that God-designed sexual expression and behavior must be exclusively oriented to love and life in marriage between one man and one woman.
7. Schools will communicate with parents or guardians about their child's behavior at school and inform them of any concerns relating to the physical, emotional, social, and spiritual health, safety, or welfare of their child, except when advised otherwise by law enforcement or a social service agency.

Definitions

1. **Sex** refers to a person's biological identification as male or female based upon physical characteristics present at birth.
2. **Sexual identity** refers to a person's identity as male or female that is congruent with one's sex.
3. **Sexual binary** refers to the God-given gift of the human family created male or female in the image and likeness of God.
4. **Transgender or gender non-conforming** is an adjective describing a person who perceives his or her sexual identity to be different from his or her sex and publicly presents himself or herself as the opposite sex or outside the sexual binary. Such public expressions that are intended to communicate a sexual identity different from one's sex include, but are not limited to, utilizing pronouns of the opposite sex, changing one's name to reflect the cultural norms of the opposite sex, wearing a uniform designated for the opposite sex, and undergoing surgery to change the appearance of one's reproductive or sexual anatomy.

Legal References

Minn. Stat. ch. 363A (Minnesota Human Rights Act)
Minn. Stat. § 121A.03, subd. 2 (Sexual, Religious and Racial Harassment and Violence Policy)
Minn. Stat. § 121A.031 (Safe and Supportive Minnesota Schools Act)
Minn. Stat. § 121A.04 (Athletic Programs; Sex Discrimination)
20 U.S.C. § 1681 et seq. (Title IX)
20 U.S.C. § 1701 et seq. (Equal Educational Opportunities)

Cross References to Diocesan Policies*

Catholic School Model Bullying Prevention Program (Minnesota Catholic Conference, 2014)
Ministerial Standards/Safe Environment Policies (Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis)

Catholic Teaching Tradition

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1997) (§364, 1907, 2297, 2333, 2393, 2521, 2522, 2523)

Pope Francis:

Laudato Si (2015) (§155)
Amoris Laetitia (2016) (§56, 285, 286)
Audiences (1/16/15; 3/23/15; 4/15/15; 6/8/15; 9/10/15; 7/27/16; 10/1/16; 11/27/16)

Pope Benedict XVI:

Deus Caritas Est (2005) (§5, 11)
Address to the Bishops of the United States of America (1/19/12)
Audiences (9/22/11; 12/21/12)

Pope Saint John Paul II:

Letter to Families (1994) (§6, 19)
Theology of the Body Wednesday Audiences (9/5/1979-11/28/1984)

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith:

Persona Humana (1975)

Congregation for Catholic Education:

“Male and Female He Created Them”: *Towards a Path of Dialogue on the Question of Gender Theory in Education* (2019)

Pontifical Council for the Family:

Family, Marriage and “De Facto” Unions (2000) (§8)

*To be completed at the local level.