

CATECHETICAL CERTIFICATION POLICY



DIocese of WILMINGTON

Office for Catholic Schools

Updated June 2026

RATIONALE

The Catechetical Certification Policy pertains to all teachers in the elementary and secondary schools of the Catholic Diocese of Wilmington. This includes both full-time and part-time Catholic and non-Catholic faculty members. It is designed to strengthen the Catholic identity and culture in our schools, to provide ongoing education on the tenets of the Catholic faith, and to offer teachers an opportunity to cultivate their personal spirituality.

This policy provides a practical, flexible framework to assist teachers in participating in ongoing faith formation each year through Diocesan and school-sponsored offerings. The focus for this faith formation plan encompasses the four pillars of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: Creed, Sacraments, Morality, and Prayer. The integration of the Diocesan yearly theme by individual schools further enhances our teachers' involvement in and practice of the faith and, in turn, the students'.

This approach to the certification of our elementary and secondary teachers in the Catholic Diocese of Wilmington, therefore, ensures that our “Catholic Schools are indeed part of the saving mission of the Church, especially for education in the faith.”

USCCB Teach Them (Washington, DC , 1975, p. 5

DIRECTORY FOR CATECHESIS (2020)

“No less than other schools does the Catholic school pursue cultural goals and the human formation of youth. But its proper function is to create for the school community a special atmosphere animated by the Gospel spirit... and finally to order the whole of human culture to the news of salvation so that the knowledge the students gradually acquire of the world, life, and man is illumined by faith’ (Gravissimum Educationis, 8). In brief, the following characteristics stand out: harmony with the formative aims of secular schools; the originality of the educational community permeated by evangelical values; attention to young people; concern for teaching the integration of faith, culture, and life.” (309)

“The Catholic school is an ecclesial subject that makes the Church’s mission visible above all in the fields of education and culture. It has as its point of reference the particular Church, with respect to which it is not a foreign body. One must not, therefore, exclude or marginalize its Catholic identity or its role in evangelization. ‘It is from its Catholic identity that the school derives its original characteristics and its ‘structure’ as a genuine instrument of the Church, a place of real and specific pastoral ministry. The Catholic school participates in the evangelizing mission of the Church and is the privileged environment in which Christian education is carried out.’” (311)

“DRAWING NEW MAPS OF HOPE” (2025)

“Catholic educational constellations are an inspiring image of how tradition and future can intertwine without contradiction: a living tradition that extends towards new forms of presence and service... Then our constellation will not only shine, but it will also guide us: towards the truth that sets us free (cf. Jn 8:32), towards the fraternity that consolidates justice (cf. Mt 23:8), towards the hope that does not disappoint (cf. Rom 5:5).”

“MAGNIFICA HUMANITAS” (2026)

“School is the place where new generations can learn to seek and love the truth, to reflect on the meaning of life and to recognize the dignity of every person... The Church’s Social Doctrine invites families, schools, Christian communities and public institutions to form a renewed educational alliance. This takes shape when fundamental principles are translated into educational goals, including teaching students a sense of moderation and limits; recognition of the rights of others and of future generations to enjoy the goods that are either provided for us or made available by human ingenuity; freedom and responsibility; and a sense of transcendence and the common good. Schools are not called to follow the pace of the digital world, but to offer that which the digital sphere by itself cannot provide, namely a shared time for learning and developing trustworthy relationships.”

INITIAL FAITH FORMATION

Required for: Teachers, Elementary and Secondary, Catholic and Non-Catholic, New to the Catholic Diocese of Wilmington OR returning teachers who have not participated in Initial Faith Formation.

- ❖ Full-time and part-time (elementary and secondary)
- ❖ Religion and non-religion teachers (elementary)
- ❖ Theology and non-theology teachers (secondary)

Provided by Catholic Schools Office (CSO):

- ❖ Orientation Retreat at New Teacher Orientation
 - Includes IFF 100: Prayer
- ❖ Three Subsequent IFF Sessions in the Fall; 200: Creed, 300: Morality, 400: Sacraments

Participation in Ongoing Faith Formation at Local School [see below]

****Initial Faith Formation is a prerequisite for the Diocesan Teacher Certification Program, and must be completed before beginning additional courses.****

ONGOING FAITH FORMATION

Required for: Administrators and Teachers, Elementary and Secondary, Catholic and Non-Catholic, working in the Catholic Diocese of Wilmington, including those in Initial Faith Formation.

- ❖ Full-time and part-time (elementary and secondary)
- ❖ Religion and non-religion teachers (elementary)
- ❖ Theology and non-theology teachers (secondary)

Annual Expectations

- ❖ Diocesan Spirituality Day
- ❖ Retreat Day at the local school (Optimal time recommended: full day; minimum 4 hours)
 - *Focus of the day should be personal spirituality, not academic or instructional*
- ❖ Completion of the ARK Assessment by all teachers and administrators
- ❖ Catechetical Formation Sessions: 3 contact hours (*e.g., 3 one-hour sessions*)
 - Administrator, or designee of the administrator, provides catechetical formation sessions (*webinars, speakers, video programs, etc.*) to cover one or more of the four pillars of the Catechism (***See Resources, page 5, for potential topics and resources***).

***All retreats and Catechetical Formation Sessions must be approved by the CSO
(See Pre-Approval Form, page 6).***

ACCOUNTABILITY

- ❖ Annual Catechetical Certification is a requirement for all administrators and teachers.
- ❖ The principal or designee of the principal will record attendance information for Spirituality Day, Catechetical Formation Hours, and school Retreat Day for the faculty on the electronic attendance document.
 - The CSO will track attendance for Initial Faith Formation.
 - In the event that a teacher or administrator cannot attend an Ongoing Faith Formation session or the school Retreat Day, the principal or designee of the principal will provide a make-up opportunity with comparable time and spiritual engagement.
- ❖ The principal will verify documentation for each teacher annually with the Catholic Schools Office.
- ❖ The Catholic Schools Office will compile an annual report of the certification status of each school, to be submitted to the Superintendent of Catholic Schools, the Bishop's Office, and the school pastor, president, and Board if applicable.
- ❖ Non-compliance by a teacher is the responsibility of the local principal.
- ❖ Non-compliance by an administrator is the responsibility of the Superintendent.

NOTES

- ❖ Two missed Initial Faith Formation sessions will result in the teacher needing to recomplete IFF in the following school year to be eligible for the Diocesan Teacher Certification Program. Consideration will be given to teachers hired later in the school year, after the New Teacher Orientation deadline, but prior to September 15. These teachers will still need to complete IFF during their first year. Teachers hired after September 15 will complete IFF in the following school year.
- ❖ Catechetical Formation hours cannot be counted simultaneously with the Retreat Day for Ongoing Faith Formation.
- ❖ Special care should be taken to ensure that Catechetical Formation Hours and the Retreat Day include the appropriate amount of authentic formation time. Ice breakers, breakfast/lunch, breaks, and similar activities can be included in the day, but are not considered formation. Attendance at Mass is approved Catechetical Formation. Please see the Sample Retreat Planning Guide or contact the Catholic Schools Office for more information.

SECONDARY SCHOOL THEOLOGY TEACHER CERTIFICATION

“In order for the teaching of the Catholic religion to be fruitful, it is fundamental that the teachers be capable of presenting the relationship between faith and culture, human and religious components, science and religion, school and other educational agencies. The task of the teacher is purely educational, oriented towards the human maturation of the students. At the same time, it is required that the teachers be believers committed to personal growth in the faith, incorporated into a Christian community, desirous of giving the reason for their faith through their professional expertise as well.”
(Directory for Catechesis (2020), 318)

The Catholic Diocese of Wilmington requires that all secondary Theology teachers be baptized, practicing Roman Catholics.

Degree Criteria

❖ Bachelor's Degree

- *Documentation of a minimum of 24 credit hours in the field of Catholic Theological Studies is required.*

Employment Procedure

- ❖ Prior to an offer of employment, the principal should review the candidate's resume and transcript with the CSO.
- ❖ In extenuating circumstances, teachers who do not meet a minimum of 24 credit hours in the field of Catholic Theological Studies may be employed as a **part-time** Theology teacher under the following conditions:
 - Lesson plans for Theology classes must be regularly reviewed by the department chair.
 - Completion of The Catechetical Formation Series by Loyola Press. Contact the CSO for more information (requires school or individual subscription).

Maintaining Certification

- ❖ Successful completion of 90 clock hours (45 of which must be in Catholic Theological Studies) **every five years.**
- ❖ The teacher will present documentation of completed hours to the principal or principal's designee every year, to be compiled in an annual report to the CSO.
- ❖ Upon the successful completion of 90 hours, documentation will be sent to the principal or principal's designee from the CSO.
- ❖ A certificate of completion must be sent to the CSO for all catechetical formation over 5 hours.
- ❖ Catechetical Certification hours (from Initial or Ongoing Faith Formation) cannot be used for Secondary School Theology Teacher Certification.

CATECHETICAL CERTIFICATION RESOURCES

Suggested Topics

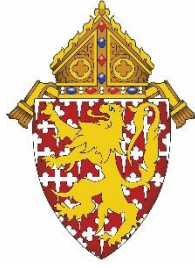
- ❖ Diocesan Theme
- ❖ School Charisms
- ❖ ARK
- ❖ Catholic Faith: Dogmas and Doctrines
- ❖ Catholic Social Teaching
- ❖ Christology
- ❖ Church History
- ❖ Ecumenism
- ❖ Hebrew Scriptures
- ❖ History of the Diocese of Wilmington
- ❖ Living as a Disciple of Christ
- ❖ Marian Theology
- ❖ Medical Ethics
- ❖ Sacraments
- ❖ Science and Religion
- ❖ Spiritual Writers
- ❖ The Gospels (individually or collectively)
- ❖ Vatican II
- ❖ Vocations
- ❖ World Religions (individually or collectively)

Online Resources

The principal or a designee (Religion Coordinator or Theology Chair) should research online resources for content, length, and topics that best fit the needs of the school community. Several recommended sites are listed below:

- ❖ **NSBECS** – Domain 1 of the National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools: “Mission and Catholic Identity.”
- ❖ **Sophia Institute for Teachers and Magis Center** – Free courses and teaching resources
 - <https://sophiateachers.org/>
 - <https://www.magiscenter.com/>
- ❖ **Real+True** - a project of OSV under the patronage of the Holy See designed to unlock the wisdom and beauty of the Catechism in using engaging, modern, and captivating content
 - <https://realtrue.org/>
- ❖ **Franciscan University Catechetical Institute**
 - Annual subscription from local school required. Contact the CSO to find the status of your school.
- ❖ **Word on Fire Digital**
 - The CSO has enrolled in a subscription to Word on Fire Digital, which provides a library of documentaries, mini-series, and courses designed to “explore the goodness, Truth, and beauty of the Faith.” <https://www.wofdigital.org/>

Contact the CSO to discuss more options that can best suit your school’s needs.



CATECHETICAL CERTIFICATION PROGRAM PRE-APPROVAL FORM

Must be submitted at least two weeks prior to the formation opportunity.

Proposal for (select one):

- ☐ Catechetical Professional Development
- ☐ Retreat Day

School Name: _____

Resource Information

- Title:
- Date/Time:
- Description (brief, 3-4 sentences; attach extra pages as needed)
 - Format, style, topics covered, etc.
 - **Please attach a proposed agenda and/or outline with this form**

- Purpose(s) for selecting this resource (attach extra pages as needed):
 - What does this topic mean for your school community? How will it be used to assist in faith formation?

Date Submitted: _____

Name of Person Submitting Proposal: _____

Position: _____

Email: _____

Principal Approval: _____

CSO Approval: _____

Date Approved: _____

SAMPLE RETREAT PLANNING GUIDES (4 hours)

Including Mass:

- I. Opening Prayer/Reflection
- II. Statement of goals and outline of the day
- III. Content
 - a. Presentation (15-20min)
 - b. Small group discussion (15-20min)
 - c. Large group share (10-15min)
- IV. Break (prepare for Mass – no food)
- V. Mass
- VI. Lunch
- VII. Content
 - a. Presentation (15-20min)
 - b. Small group discussion (15-20min)
 - c. Large group share (10-15min)
- VIII. Group Activity
 - a. 3-2-1 Reflection
 - i. 3 - Key points or takeaways.
 - ii. 2 - Questions you still have.
 - iii. 1 - Way you would like to continue to grow on your faith journey.
- IX. Final Reflection and Prayer

Schedule without Mass

- I. Opening Prayer/Reflection
- II. Statement of goals and outline of the day
- III. Content
 - a. Presentation (15-20min)
 - b. Small group discussion (15-20min)
 - c. Large group share (10-15min)
- IV. Break
- V. Meditation Activity(s) (30-45min)
 - a. Lectio Divina
 - b. Group Rosary
 - c. Individual prayer journaling
 - d. Reflection with music
 - e. Prayer Walk
- VI. Large Group sharing (5-10min)
- VII. Break/Lunch
- VIII. Content
 - a. Presentation (15-20min)
 - b. Small group discussion (15-20min)
 - c. Large group share (10-15min)
- IX. Group Activity
 - a. 3-2-1 Reflection
 - i. 3 - Key points or takeaways.
 - ii. 2 - Questions you still have.
 - iii. 1 - Way you would like to continue to grow on your faith journey.
- X. Final Reflection and Prayer

Notes:

- ❖ This format is for suggested use only; other formats, times, activities, or retreat plans may be approved by the Catholic Schools Office upon submission of the Catechetical Certification Program Pre-Approval Form.
- ❖ It is recommended to include Mass in the Retreat Day, which could take place at any point during the day and would be part of the formation hours of the retreat.
- ❖ Ice breakers, breakfast/lunch, breaks, and similar activities can be included in the day, but are not considered formation hours.

FORMS

***All forms and templates may be found on the CSO Intranet under
“Professional Resources.”***