

August 2013



# Diocese of Rochester

Department of Catholic Schools

[www.dorschools.org](http://www.dorschools.org)

**S**hared **E**xpectations for **E**xcellence in **D**evelopment

This belongs to:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Homeroom: \_\_\_\_\_

**“The Catholic school forms part of the saving mission of the Church, especially for education in the faith.”**

*-The Catholic School (1977)*

**“From the moment that a student sets foot in a Catholic school, he or she ought to have the impression of entering a new environment, one illumined by the light of faith, and having its own unique characteristics.”**

*-The Religious Dimensions of Education in a Catholic School (1988)*

**“Catholic parents are reminded of their duty to send their children to Catholic schools wherever this is possible, to give Catholic schools all the support in their power, and to cooperate with them in their work for the good of all their children.”**

*-Gravissimum Educationis (1965)*

**“Prime responsibility for creating this unique Christian school climate rests with the teachers, as individuals and as a community. Teaching has an extraordinary moral depth and is one of man’s most excellent and creative activities, for the teacher does not write on inanimate material, but on the very spirits of human beings.”**

*-The Religious Dimensions of Education in a Catholic School (1988)*

**“The project of the Catholic school is convincing only if carried out by people who are deeply motivated, because they witness to a living encounter with Christ, in whom alone, the mystery of man truly becomes clear.”**

*-Educating Together in Catholic Schools (2007)*

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# **Introduction**

## **Our Mission**

The Diocese of Rochester holds that Catholic schools serve as an extension of the Church's education ministry, which continues the teaching mission of Jesus. As a significant component of life long faith formation, Catholic schools assist families in fulfilling their mission to:

- Preserve and teach the doctrines of the Catholic faith;
- Provide a learning faith community which fosters academic excellence;
- Nurture young people to become service-oriented, responsible, and self-disciplined individuals.

Catholic schools recognize the dignity of each child and the rights of parents as primary educators of their children.

## **Purpose**

***Shared Expectations for Excellence in Development*** was originally published in August 2013 to replace ***SHAPE 2000 and Beyond... Sharing High Assessment & Performance Expectations***. The guidelines included in this new document are being shared with our faculty and staff, students, parent(s)/guardian(s), and our school communities. The naming of this document and the inclusion of a broader audience was done to reflect our efforts to create a supportive school environment that fulfills our mission. By registering at a Diocese of Rochester school, students and parent(s)/guardian(s) agree to adhere to this document and understand that the Department of Catholic Schools reserves the right to make changes to this document at any time. Individual schools are expected to publish a school handbook that supplements this document with specific policies and procedures.

# **Academics**

## **Curriculum**

Our curriculum integrates our faith and includes all teaching and learning experiences. The curriculum taught in our schools aligns with the Common Core State Standards issued by the National Governors Association and the New York State Learning Standards issued by the New York State Education Department. The Common Core State Standards are a clear set of shared goals and expectations for the knowledge and skills that will help our students succeed. The Common Core State Standards focus on English language arts and mathematics since they are areas which students build skill sets that are used in other subjects and they are also the subjects most frequently assessed for New York State accountability purposes. The New York State Learning Standards are designed to provide all students an engaging and developmentally appropriate education and are organized according to seven subject areas:

- Arts
- Career Development & Occupational Studies
- English Language Arts
- Health, Physical Education, Family & Consumer Sciences
- Languages Other Than English
- Mathematics, Science, Technology
- Social Studies

Religion in our curriculum is taught daily as a core subject at all grade levels, and is integrated into all subject areas and aspects of the school day. Prayer occurs multiple times daily, and the integration of religious values within other subject areas is the constant responsibility of all faculty and staff. The religious curriculum is grouped into four categories comprised of fourteen total themes:

- Word – Revelation, Scripture, Creedal Concepts
- Worship – Sacraments, Prayer and Worship, Special Seasons
- Community – Church, Faith and Identity, Personal Growth, Relationships
- Discipleship – Christian Lifestyles, Morality, Justice and Peace, Service

Teachers are encouraged to collaborate to show the connections between all subject areas and allow for students to apply knowledge and skills in preparation for college and careers. Teachers are expected to use

resources aligned with the Common Core State Standards and the New York State Learning Standards to devise lesson plans and tailor instruction to the individual needs of their students.

### **Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core**

The New York State Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core is organized into five broad developmental and interrelated domains. The five distinct and highly interrelated domains are:

- Approaches to Learning – How children become involved in learning and acquiring knowledge.
- Physical Development and Health – Children’s physical health and ability to engage in daily activities.
- Social and Emotional Development – The emotional competence and ability to form positive relationships that give meaning to children’s experiences in the home, school, and larger community.
- Communication, Language, and Literacy – How children understand, create, and communicate meaning.
- Cognition and Knowledge of the World – What children need to know and understand about their world and how they apply what they know. This domain is a direct reflection of the content competencies and knowledge of the Common Core Learning Standards.

The primary purpose of prekindergarten standards is to ensure all children have rich and varied early learning experiences which prepare them for success in school and lay the foundation for college and career readiness.

### **Common Core Learning Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy**

The Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) for English Language Arts and Literacy define general, cross-disciplinary literacy expectations that must be met and the characteristics of CCLS aligned instruction. The standards are organized into four overlapping strands: Reading, Writing, Language, and Speaking/Listening. Because the CCLS present an integrated model of literacy, the standards mutually inform one another. Successful integration of the standards provides students with necessary fluency, comprehension, analytic and communication skills necessary to be on track for college and career readiness. The integration of the standards into instruction also requires instructional shifts, which are born out in the specific fluency, comprehension, analytic, and communication expectations stated in the standards. As a result of CCLS aligned instruction, students will readily undertake the close, attentive reading that is at the heart of understanding and enjoying complex works of literature. They will habitually perform the critical reading necessary to carefully pick through the staggering amount of information available today in print and digital texts. They will actively seek deep and thoughtful engagement with high quality literary and informational texts that build knowledge, enlarge experiences, and broaden worldviews. They reflexively demonstrate the cogent reasoning and use of evidence that is essential to both private deliberation and responsible citizenship. Students who

meet the standards develop the skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening that are the foundation for any creative and purposeful expression in language. Instructional shifts demanded by the Common Core Learning Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy are:

- Shift 1 – Balancing Informational & Literary Texts
- Shift 2 – Knowledge in the Disciplines
- Shift 3 – Staircase of Complexity
- Shift 4 – Text-based Answers
- Shift 5 – Writing from Sources
- Shift 6 – Academic Vocabulary

### **Common Core Learning Standards for Mathematics**

The main design principles in the Common Core Learning Standards for Mathematics are focus, coherence, and rigor. These principles require that students and teachers at each grade level focus their time and energy on fewer topics in order to form deeper understandings, gain greater skill and fluency, and more robustly apply what is learned. Focus in the curriculum is necessary to give students an opportunity to understand concepts and practice in order to reach a deep and fluent understanding. Coherence in the curriculum is meant to provide progressions that span grade levels to build students' understanding of ever more sophisticated mathematical concepts and applications. Rigor requires a combination of fluency exercises, chains of reasoning, abstract activities, and contextual activities. Instructional shifts demanded by the Common Core Learning Standards in Mathematics are:

- Shift 1 – Focus
- Shift 2 – Coherence
- Shift 3 – Fluency
- Shift 4 – Deep Understanding
- Shift 5 – Application
- Shift 6 – Dual Intensity

# **Assessment**

## **Assessment Philosophy**

The Department of Catholic Schools asserts that the primary purpose of assessment is to improve student learning by providing specific and timely feedback while informing the teaching process. Students are assessed on a formative and summative basis. Teachers are expected to provide effective feedback that can be used to improve student learning. A number or letter grade is considered only a minor component of assessment as neither provides the authentic feedback necessary to improve student learning. Expectations for the completion of student work must be explicit. Rubrics with indicators and samples of appropriate work should be provided whenever possible.

## **Summative Assessments**

Summative assessments occur at the conclusion of each unit of study during the school year. Summative assessments come in a variety of forms in order to ascertain students' enduring understandings. Project-based applications of knowledge and skills are encouraged when possible, but there is also value to "traditional tests" when properly designed and appropriately used. The principal is the instructional leader of the school and should regularly advise teachers to ensure the appropriateness of summative assessments. Summative assessments should be completed primarily within the school day, but portions may be required to be completed elsewhere when appropriate. Summative assessments can be completed as an individual or group at the discretion of the teacher, but each student should be individually assessed based on his or her work. When the nature of the assessment permits, summative assessments should be evaluated using a rubric with indicators that is provided with the description of the assessment at the beginning of the unit of study. Letter and number grades may also be used when appropriate. For each unit of study, teachers should retain samples of summative assessments exhibiting high, medium, and low quality work and any accompanying rubrics with feedback. The original, a copy, or photographic documentation is acceptable depending on the nature of the summative assessment. Summative assessments constitute 60% of the marking period grade.

## **Formative Assessments**

Formative assessments occur frequently throughout each unit of study during the school year. Formative assessments take a variety of forms as they comprise all assessments completed both in class and at home that are not summative assessments. A "traditional test" can be used as a formative assessment in preparation for the summative assessment. In-class formative assessments constitute 30% of the marking period grade.

Homework is an important part of the learning process as it reinforces classroom instruction, fosters study skills and independence, and informs parent(s)/guardian(s) of the curriculum. Homework may take a variety of forms including written work, studying, and reading. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) are encouraged to provide suitable conditions for the successful completion of homework. The amount of homework is at the discretion of the teacher and should be grade-level appropriate. A general guideline is ten minutes of homework per numerical grade level. Questions and concerns regarding homework should first be addressed with the teacher, and then if necessary, the principal. At-home formative assessments constitute 10% of the marking period grade.

### **Semester Examinations**

To limit the loss of instruction time and uphold the primary purpose of assessment, semester (January & June) exams are not permitted. Students are expected to exhibit evidence of their learning through the completion of summative assessments at the conclusion of each unit of study. Time traditionally spent reviewing and administering semester examinations should be used for instructional purposes.

### **New York State Assessments**

In addition to teacher-developed assessments, New York State mandates an increasing number of standardized assessments to evaluate both student and school performance. Students receiving inadequate scores on standardized assessments will receive academic intervention services. In keeping with the primary purpose of assessment, the Department of Catholic Schools strives to minimize the loss of instruction time due to standardized testing while complying with New York State regulations.

### **Student Support**

Teachers are expected to modify their teaching styles to meet the learning needs of each student. The school is expected to address the learning needs of students with learning disabilities when possible and in cooperation with the local public school district's pupil personnel services. Teachers will follow an Individualized Education Plan or the school's Academic Accommodation Plan for students with learning disabilities when assessing student growth and progress. The plan must indicate how academic progress will be communicated to the parent(s)/guardian(s) throughout the school year and becomes part of the student's permanent academic record.

### **Student Work**

All students are expected to use proper handwriting skills in all work and exemplify neatness. The discretion of the principal is relied upon as instructional leader of the school, but the general guide is for manuscript

(printing) to be used exclusively in kindergarten and first grade, with cursive writing to be introduced in second grade. Handwriting should be integrated into instruction of all subject areas after second grade and both styles of writing should be utilized through eighth grade. A standard heading should be used for written work that includes student name, date, grade, subject, and school name. The rules of writing mechanics (grammar, spelling, and punctuation) should be followed for all written work. Teachers provide instruction on note-taking and organizational skills and students are expected to maintain neat and well organized class materials and notes. The use of technology for completing assignments is at the discretion of the teacher dependent upon student learning needs and the availability of technology.

### **Progress Reports**

All schools are required to report student progress to parent(s)/guardian(s) four times each school year using the standardized Department of Catholic Schools Progress Report Card. An in-person parent/guardian conference is required to be offered at least once annually, but teachers and parent(s)/guardian(s) are encouraged to request additional conferences as needed. More regular forms of communication such as interim reports, phone calls, e-mails, and letters are strongly encouraged to create a relationship of trust and transparency. For students consistently not meeting academic expectations, discussions should focus on interventions, remedial services, and future placement.

### **Prekindergarten Report Cards**

Prekindergarten utilizes a Common Core State Standards based progress report card with the following marking code for all content areas:

- P Proficient (often)
- E Emerging (in process)
- N Needs More Time
- X Not evaluated at this time

### **Kindergarten – Second Grade Report Cards**

Kindergarten through second grade utilizes a criteria based progress report card with the following marking code for major content areas:

- Level 4 – Demonstrates a thorough understanding of subject matter. Evidence of student achievement in classwork, homework, and assessments meets and exceeds NYS and Diocesan standards.
- Level 3 – Demonstrates a clear understanding of subject matter. Evidence of student achievement in classwork, homework, and assessments meets NYS and Diocesan standards.

- Level 2 – Demonstrates a partial understanding of subject matter. Evidence of student achievement in classwork, homework, and assessments does not always meet NYS and Diocesan standards.
- Level 1 – Does not demonstrate an understanding of subject matter. Evidence of student achievement in classwork, homework, and assessments does not meet NYS and Diocesan standards.

Kindergarten through second grade utilizes a criteria based progress report card with the following marking code for subcategories:

- + Outstanding
- □ Satisfactory
- N Needs Improvement
- I Improving
- X Not evaluated at this time

### **Third Grade – Sixth Grade Report Cards**

Third grade through sixth grade utilizes a criteria based progress report card with the following marking code for major content areas:

- **A**            **95-100**            Excellent, far exceeds standards
- **B+**            **90-94**
- **B**             **85-89**            Good, above average
- **C+**            **80-84**
- **C**             **75-79**            Satisfactory, meets standards
- **D**             **70-74**            Unsatisfactory, does not meet standards
- **F**             **0-69**             Failure, lacks understanding and ability to apply skills

Third grade through sixth grade utilizes a criteria based progress report card with the following marking code for subcategories:

- + Outstanding
- □ Satisfactory
- N Needs Improvement
- I Improving
- X Not evaluated at this time

Special content areas such as art, computer technology, music, and physical education are taught less frequently than other subject areas. In order to provide adequate time for assessment, report card grades are only determined for marking periods two and four.

### **Seventh Grade – Eighth Grade Report Cards**

Seventh grade through eighth grade utilizes a criteria based progress report card with the following marking code for major content areas:

- **A**            **95-100**            Excellent, far exceeds standards
- **B+**            **90-94**
- **B**             **85-89**            Good, above average
- **C+**            **80-84**
- **C**             **75-79**            Satisfactory, meets standards
- **D+**            **70-74**
- **D**             **65-69**            Unsatisfactory, does not meet standards
- **F**             **0-64**             Failure, lacks understanding and ability to apply skills

Seventh grade through eighth grade utilizes a criteria based progress report card with the following marking code for subcategories:

- +            Outstanding
- □            Satisfactory
- N            Needs Improvement
- I            Improving
- X            Not evaluated at this time

Certain special content areas such as art, computer technology, music, and physical education are taught less frequently than other subject areas. In order to provide adequate time for assessment, report card grades are only determined for marking periods two and four.

### **Seventh Grade – Eighth Grade Honor Rolls**

Seventh grade and eighth grade students earning an average of 95% or greater in core subject areas as well as no grade below 85% in any subject area achieve High Honor Roll for the marking period. Seventh grade and eighth grade students earning an average of 85-94.9% in core subject areas as well as no grade below 80% in any subject area achieve Honor Roll for the marking period.

### **Final Course Grades**

The final course grade is an average of the four marking period grades.

### **Student Placement**

The placement of a child in a particular grade is an important part of the educational process. Each school principal should use every available means to identify an individual student's learning needs. Final acceptance of a new student does not occur until previous school records have been reviewed and the student has been evaluated. The particular methods of evaluation are at the discretion of the school principal. All potential kindergarten students are involved in an approved screening process to determine readiness for kindergarten. Additional evaluations may be necessary in subsequent years. Placement in third through sixth grade requires a combined final average of C in the major content areas in the previous grade. Placement in seventh through eighth grade requires a passing final average in each of the major content areas in the previous grade. Students who do not successfully complete the course of study in a major content area (Religion, English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies) are required to complete an approved summer school program in order to advance to the next level. Grade retention is not common practice, yet may be required if it is in the best interest of the student. In such circumstances, frequent communication between the Department of Catholic Schools, the principal, teacher(s), and parent(s)/guardian(s) should occur during the second and third marking period with the final decision being made prior to the conclusion of the school year. The written recommendation for grade retention is made by the principal with the final decision being at the discretion of the superintendent. Parent(s)/guardian(s) are encouraged to submit a written statement with the principal's recommendation. If a student has not completed the necessary coursework required for commencement they will be given a certificate of attendance at the time of commencement. Upon completion of the coursework through an approved summer school program, the certificate of achievement/diploma is issued.

### **Student Records**

It is the responsibility of the principal to oversee the annual completion of all students' records in consultation with the Department of Catholic Schools.