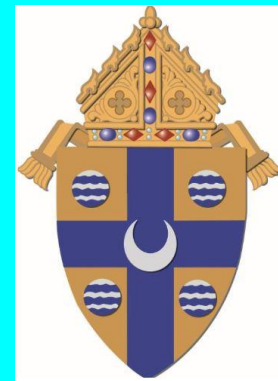


**Diocese of Springfield in Illinois
OFFICE FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**



**PRESCHOOLS
HANDBOOK 2017**



**Diocese of Springfield in Illinois
Office for Catholic Schools
Preschool Programs**

Preschool programs provide an opportunity for parents or legal guardians to enroll their children in a continuum of quality care in an educational setting that is pleasing to them. Parents know that educational programs in a Catholic school are sound, the teachers care about children, and a safe, disciplined school environment reflects the ideals that Jesus presents to all. With this in mind, Springfield diocesan Catholic schools are committed to offer the same quality programs in our preschools that we provide in our Catholic elementary and secondary schools.

Definition

A preschool is a Catholic school or parish program that enrolls children of preschool age for the purpose of providing educational services designed to prepare the children for school in the years before they enter elementary school. Preschool age children are between the ages of 3 and 5 years, attaining the age of 3 by September 1 of the specified school year. Age adjustments may be made at the upper end of the scale for those students who do not enter kindergarten at age 5 or are currently enrolled in a half-day kindergarten program and attend the preschool program for the second half of the day.

Licensing

When establishing a preschool program in parishes where there is an existing elementary school, the preschool becomes an extension of the existing school and will therefore not require licensing by the Department of Children and Family Services. The preschool program must follow the diocesan policies of the “Handbook of Policies from Book 3: The Teaching Office of the Church” and regulations set by the Office for Catholic Schools.

When establishing a preschool program in a parish that does not have an elementary school, the preschool must be licensed by the Department of Children and Family Services and must also follow the diocesan policies of the “Handbook of Policies from Book 3: The Teaching Office of the Church” and regulations set by the Office for Catholic Schools.

Prerequisites

- 1. The pastor shall write a letter to the bishop (with a copy going to the diocesan superintendent) requesting permission to begin the process of establishing a preschool viability study.**
- 2. When/if permission is received from the bishop, the pastor may begin the viability study as outlined below.**

Procedures

- A. Survey the parents/parish to establish the need/interest for a preschool program.**
- B. Determine building needs and costs. All preschools shall follow DCFS fire, building, zoning, and health code licensing requirements and Illinois State Board of Education requirements. (Preschools are to be at ground level, etc.)**
- C. Identify funding sources. Start up, salaries, construction or renovation, furniture, equipment, supplies, publicity, working capital must be considered.**
- D. Determine enrollment needs and fees.**
- E. Establish accountability link to principal (if aligned to a Catholic elementary school) or to a board (if aligned to a parish without a school).**

F. Once financing, personnel, governance, and basic program information have been determined, the pastor must write a second letter to the bishop (copy to the diocesan superintendent) requesting permission to continue the process of establishing a preschool. The letter shall include the overall plan, program information, and documentation of compliance with the state fire marshal as well as local requirements.

G. Once permission is granted by the bishop, the Office for Catholic Schools shall be contacted for information regarding curriculum, handbooks, personnel information and other requirements.

Regulations

A preschool is subject to the same policies as found in the “Handbook of Policies from Book 3: The Teaching Office of the Church”.

A. The lead teacher position will be held by a qualified teacher, one who holds a degree and the appropriate certification from the Illinois State Board of Education. The Director of the program shall hold a degree and certification in education with an early childhood emphasis. Protecting God’s Children, background check and fingerprinting is mandated.

B. Classroom aides may be paid or voluntary. A training session must be held before the beginning of school. Protecting God’s Children, background check and fingerprinting is mandated.

C. Suggested class size is 1:10 with maximum of 20 in a classroom.

The Office for Catholic Schools shall be contacted with any questions regarding preschools.

Daycare Programs

Any child care program which provides care for children under the age of 3 or any program which provides babysitting rather than education is not regulated by the diocesan Office for Catholic Schools. Daycare programs must be licensed by the Department of Children and Family Services.

“Drop-in” programs in which a parent may drop off a child without previous meetings or discussions with the administrator of the program are prohibited.