

# *Home and School Association Resource Handbook*

For Catholic Elementary Schools in the Archdiocese of Hartford

*"The family is, forgive me, it is a factory of hope, of life, of resurrection. God was the one who opened that path." Pope Francis*

Dear Home and School Leaders,

*"We renew our faith in the word of the Lord which invites faithful families to this openness. It invites all those who want to share the prophecy of the covenant of man and woman, which generates life and reveals God!" Pope Francis*

You and your associates are a vital part of the Home and School Team. Students, parents, teachers, supervisors, equipment and buildings are important, but without leadership of an active and supportive Home and School Association (HSA), all of the various components will not mesh into one productive, faith-centered community.

The Home and School Association Handbook has been developed to assist your school in the sound organization of the Home and School Association as well as creative ways to breathe life into your existing Home and School Association. As you work to strengthen this vital arm of support to the Catholic school, may the wisdom and encouragement of the Holy Spirit help you to strengthen the ties among three constituent groups – the parents/guardians, teachers, and members of the parish(es). You are an important part of the team as you share the ultimate goal of experiencing transformation in children – formation in their faith, growth academically, the development of a moral compass, safe practice of social media, understanding and practice of virtuous behavior such as a reliance on prayer, fair play, honesty, loyalty, generosity, generous service, mercy toward others, and justice.

Some of the research for this handbook is derived from the research of John Dewey, a well-respected philosopher, psychologist and educator. His basic philosophy of education stems from his belief that education must occur in the larger framework beyond the school: the family, the community, social

engagement, and the associational role of the educator (Dewey, J. (1916) *Democracy and Education*.) The Catholic school firmly supports the belief that parents/guardians are the primary educators of their children, and that the school works hand in hand in this process (2020 Vision: Eye on Our Future, *Mission Formation and Evangelization* 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 3.1, 3.4, *Excellence in Education* 7.1, 7.3, 7.4.)

Home and School Associations formally support this philosophy and assist the administration as well as the faculty in providing a rich, vibrant, backdrop to the educative experience of children. Beyond this the HSA is a vital cog in the wheel of evangelization. It is the responsibility of each of us to make the kingdom of God present in our world (*The Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis.)

Many thanks to the PACE Committee for their creative assistance with the development of a Home and School Resource Handbook:

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## 1. The Home and School Association

*“God sends his Spirit into our hearts to make us his children, transforming us and enabling us to respond to his love by our lives.” The Joy of the Gospel, Pope Francis*

A Home and School Association (HSA) should be organized in every Catholic school. Effective, continuous promotion should be used to welcome not only parents/guardians but grandparents and parishioners of the associated Church(es). This is a new proposition. If Catholic school educators are to eliminate the gap between Catholic school and parish, we must take the opportunity to bring the entire school and church community together, when it is possible. Pastors, Principals, parents/guardians, senior citizens, and all church members should be invited to experience the depth and warmth of Catholic education. This is a new avenue for positive marketing of our schools.

When close ties exist between the Home and School officers and those in charge of Religious education and youth ministry, the divide disappears and new opportunities for collaboration and positive support result. Somehow all the needs of children are viewed through the lens of our Catholic faith rather than one entity or the other. Our new challenge is to assist the Catholic HSA to work collaboratively with Religious education and the parish in order to strengthen bonds between school and parish, as both entities address the needs of all children.

## 2. Purpose and Objectives

*...we are to be God’s leaven in the midst of humanity.  
The Joy of the Gospel, Pope Francis*

- To budget a line item with a designated amount of money to be given to the school for operating expenses (anything above the budgeted amount could be used for cultural activities, technology, building or program enhancements) decided by collaboration of the HSA and the administration of the school
- To provide opportunities for ‘fun raising’ among the families, friends and parishioners

- To promote cooperation between parents/guardians and teachers in the educational process
- To provide a natural setting for evangelization from school to home and to community
- To encourage a relationship with the parish. Many activities may be handled by various school committees such as Student Council or Advancement Committee or committees coordinated with parish groups.
- To give suggestions on how to mirror the school experience at home by initiating faith- based book talks, small scripture groups, offering speakers, written articles, shared experiences among parents/guardians with regard to safety, a nurturing environment, discipline, good practices and habits such as regular mass attendance, family prayer at mealtime, etc.
- To strengthen the relationship between home and school with emails and newsletters and by promoting such activities as:
  - a. Providing frequent communication between home and school.
  - b. Inviting parents to visit the school when appropriate
  - c. Encouraging teachers to communicate frequently with parents/guardians of students
  - d. Creating opportunities for volunteer services as requested by the school
  - e. Assisting in providing the school with additional equipment and facilities not provided by the operating budget
- To work as parent ambassadors for all new families and to encourage engagement of these families into a community toward the goal of enrolling more parish children as well as children from other parishes and the community at large
- From these communities come new volunteers as well as support during transitions for new families
- To provide opportunities for underserved children to attend Catholic school

- To assist with school open houses, student classroom activities where permitted
- To arrange for smooth assignments of homeroom parents/guardians ensuring that all have an opportunity to participate

### 3. Organization and Duties of Officers

*By virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples. The Joy of the Gospel, Pope Francis*

#### Membership:

- Immediate members of the school families are members of the association. Some options for investment in the organization may be a membership fee per family or required hours of service (that may be covered by a set fee paid rather than hours served.)

#### Officers and term limits:

- All parents/guardians of students are encouraged to be active in the Home and School Association

The officers shall consist of:

- a chair or president and assistant chair or president (for smooth succession) 2 year term renewable once
- a secretary 2 year term renewable once
- a treasurer 2 year term renewable once
- events coordinator (set up and take down, and lock up for activities – also will manage volunteers so that same people are not always asked to help)
- A liaison to the school board may report at the school board meetings regarding the activities of the Home and School. This liaison is not a full member and does not have voting rights. If the board meeting is not open to parents, the Home and School liaison should leave the board meeting after his/her report is delivered.

*Where a school is supported by more than one church, every effort should be made to have a broad representation from all Catholic parishes and/or non-Catholic parishes.*

### Chair/President:

- The leader of the Home and School Association shall be an individual with persuasive and leadership abilities – one who is able to delegate responsibilities and work on goals also. It is important that this individual is a strong proponent of Catholic education, of the school's administration, and a supporter of the pastor.

### Secretary:

- The secretary will keep the records of the association, minutes, votes, etc., and provide clear minutes to the Home and School Executive Board as well as collecting copies for the school's office book should any member wish to review the minutes. The secretary will send Mass or sympathy cards, birthday, get well, or congratulation cards when appropriate.

### Treasurer:

- The responsibilities of the treasurer are to collect dues from the members if this is the practice. In addition all fundraising dollars will be recorded and deposited in the school's account clearly designated as HSA income. All monies must be counted and remain in the school and deposited as soon as possible.
- If there is a separate Home and School Account, checks payable to the school's operating budget should be made at regular intervals during the school year until the budgeted amount of support is reached.
- The treasurer will be responsible for the collection and tracking of membership dues, for payment due for all activities or items purchased for the school beyond the total amount committed to the operating budget.
- The treasurer will offer financial reports at every HSA meeting.
- Monies due to replace hours of service will also be recorded and reported by treasurer.

### The School Principal:

- The Principal shall be an ex officio member of the Home and School Association by virtue of position.

- All Home and School plans should be approved in collaboration with the Principal.
- It should be the responsibility of the Principal to strengthen the ties among parish(es), school, and home. At all times the Principal must keep in mind that every activity of the school must reflect the teachings of the Church, the Catholic Intellectual Tradition, Catholic Social Teaching, and the desire to create the kingdom of God on earth.

#### 4. Getting Started

##### Tips for Leadership:

- Select a friend to serve as co-chair (generally this partnership provides a solid foundation to share responsibilities)
- Develop a Home and School staff, giving each one a specific duty in an area they enjoy (i.e. fund-raising, fun - raising, homeroom chairs, hot lunch program, activities, specific committee, Catholic school month, spring/fall picnic, teacher appreciation day, playground duty assignments, copying moms, etc.)
- With your Principal and committee, make a general calendar of events taking into consideration the town, the school, and the parish calendar. Changes may need to be made, but at least you will be on safe ground for planning.
- Set goals for the year that are attainable. Do not take on more than you and your committees can really achieve or you will burn out and become discouraged.
- Show appreciation (verbal, written, and/or public) for the help you receive. It is so important to feel appreciated.
- Two of the most important tasks of the HSA are to communicate frequently and inclusively with Principal, school staff, parents/guardians, parish and school community, and to show appreciation. School parent address lists may not be publicized or used without direct permission from Parents.

## 5. Activities / Projects

*The genius of each people receives in its own way the entire Gospel and embodies it in its expressions of prayer, fraternity, justice, struggle, and celebration. The Joy of the Gospel, Pope Francis*

- Working with the school administration and church pastor, every effort should be made to encourage all children who are Catholic to attend mass weekly. Planning promotional activities that may include the church is a positive way to connect both entities.
- Participating at baptisms by writing notes of welcome to the Church with messages welcoming them as future students in the school  
If school has an advancement committee, baptism messages are often handled by this committee.
- Working toward the goal of increased enrollment by serving as parent ambassadors
- Promoting school awareness to the public through press releases of activities and events
- Communicating school events and activities to church members
- Enhancing Parent-Teacher Relationships by offering a first day of school welcome bouquet of flowers or a snack bag, or providing cookies and coffee on parent/guardian conference days
- Volunteering to watch children in classes during Faculty appreciation luncheon hosted by the Home and School Association

The most effective education will take place when teachers and parents work together to provide an environment where children can learn and grow. Activities may include the following:

- Inviting parents to visit the school.

- Assisting teachers in presenting special programs, including open House  
Schedule programs at times that accommodate working parents and take into consideration multiple children in a family.
- Selecting room mothers, fathers, or guardians for the school year
- Sending home articles in the school newsletters on productive parent/guardian/teacher relationships

### Additional Activities and Projects

These may include:

- ✓ School fairs (Fall or Spring)
- ✓ Candy, fruit, nut, and candle sales
- ✓ Walk-a-thons or Bike-a-thons
- ✓ Car washes
- ✓ Food fairs
- ✓ Hobby shows
- ✓ Pancake breakfasts
- ✓ Flea markets
- ✓ Spaghetti suppers
- ✓ Canned goods labels and box tops
- ✓ Cash register receipts collected
- ✓ Scrip card sales (maybe handled by separate school committee)

## 6. Encourage Effective Parenting

An additional function of the HSA is to encourage effective parenting in an atmosphere of love through suggestions such as small faith groups to discuss a book or topic on faith, prayer, family worship, and positive adult modeling.

Activities may include:

- Providing a parent education lending library of books, websites, video talks, etc.

- Sending home timely parenting articles in the school newsletter or church Bulletin
- Focusing on family values through talks by the Pastor, guest speakers, parish prayer opportunities, and encouraging parents to actively participate in parish ministries, etc.
- Planning social activities that bring families together
- Fund raising is a major function of the HAS. It has proven to be valuable in providing resources to the school in terms of additional equipment and materials to enhance the school program

#### 7. Suggested Yearly Program Ideas

*To understand this reality we need to approach it with the gaze of the Good Shepherd, who seeks not to judge but to love. The Joy of the Gospel, Pope Francis*

- These ideas, programs and events may be helpful as you plan a yearly program. Adapt them to meet the specific needs of your school. One major HSA sponsored activity per month is a reasonable expectation if you have committees dedicated to the success of each event. One small group cannot assume the responsibility for monthly activities.
- Participate in school registration or the first parent/teacher opening of school meeting. This is a good time to get volunteers signed up in areas of their choice. Remember to enlist the support of your school principal, faculty, pastor and school board.

#### AUGUST / SEPTEMBER

- Establish/expand parent education lending library
- Get-acquainted retreat, supper and dedication for teachers, school board members and HSA leaders
- Meet your teacher program/open house
- Bake sale
- Contribute messages from students to the parish bulletin.

- Back-to-school potluck and Open house or a hot dog luncheon
- Hot lunch program
- Fall picnic

## OCTOBER

- Fundraiser
- Fall festival
- Formal Home and School meeting
- Community service project (planned by principal)
- Oktoberfest, pumpkin patch fun fest, or harvest party
- Open house
- Help with hot lunch

## NOVEMBER

- Assist with Parent Conferences
- Help with hot lunch
- Thanksgiving dinner/brunch for students and staff
- Newsletter to homes
- Formal Home and School meeting
- Fundraiser

## DECEMBER

- Assist the teacher with Christmas program as requested
- Christmas party for children as directed by school practice
- Newsletter to parents
- Home and School meeting
- Fundraiser/Parent social
- Refreshments served at school Christmas program
- Bake sale at Christmas program

## JANUARY

- Assist with catholic schools month activities
- Plan a “family values” weekend at your parish
- Continue to promote parent education lending library
- Home and School meeting
- Saturday evening family social
- Fundraiser

- Help with hot lunch
- Newsletter
- Assist with art show

## FEBRUARY

- Faculty-parent social
- Home and School meeting
- Help with hot lunch
- Fundraiser
- Newsletter
- Talent show
- Community service project

## MARCH

- Sponsor Grandparents day
- Home and School meeting
- Help with hot lunch
- Fundraiser
- Assist with basketball tournaments
- Newsletter

## APRIL

- Sponsor Teacher Appreciation Week activities (4th week of April)
- Fundraiser
- Newsletter
- Help with hot lunch
- Assist with Pre-k, kindergarten 'moving up' activities
- Assist teachers with science, social studies or art fair
- Home and School meeting

## MAY

- Mother's Day brunch
- Assist with spring concert
- Fundraiser
- Newsletter
- School picnic

- Assist with school closing program / 8th grade graduation

## 8. In the Summer and HSA

In the summer don't put your HSA enthusiasm to rest!

- Keep the parish aware of the school program during the summer. Include everyone in the parish in your summer activities. PUBLICIZE and RECRUIT.
- Plan a party and celebrate summer birthdays of teachers and students
- Plan a summer outing/picnic
- Sponsor a special school renewal or clean-up project
- Hold a summer work bee among a variety of classes
- Focus on school media center - inventory, investigate electronic card catalog for books if school does not yet use this method.
- Father's Day at the park
- Hold weekly story hour or craft time

## 9. Meetings

*Dialogue is much more than the communication of a truth. It arises from the enjoyment of speaking and it enriches those who express their love for one another through the medium of words. The Joy of the Gospel, Pope Francis*

One of the main functions of the Home and School is:

- to strengthen the home/family and school relationship. Traditionally this has been accomplished through monthly or quarterly meetings focusing on family centered topics. Due to our busy life-styles, attendance at these types of activities can be very sparse. It is discouraging to the Home and School leader who has put time and effort into planning such a program to have only a few attend.

Times have changed. Other avenues have been suggested throughout this handbook to accomplish the same objective. As always it is up to the leadership team:

- To choose the methods that best fit your talents and the needs of your constituents. If your parents enjoy coming out to monthly or quarterly meetings on timely topics, continue the tradition.

A best practice has been:

- To plan for 4 full meetings in a school year, one being the first Meet and Greet of the year. The administration and faculty generally will organize this opening meeting. HSA can be very helpful in planning refreshments, introducing the officers, reviewing the agenda, and informing the parent audience of the financial commitment of the HAS
- To provide sign-up sheets for attendees to commit to working on one of the activities or committees
- To act as greeters for new families to the school community

Following are some ideas for meetings that have provided interest and maintained effectiveness:

- Plan for attractive and interesting programs:
  - Make them practical
  - Plan them in advance
  - Start and end on time
  - Have students provide the first and last feature of the program
- Plan supervised activities for students and younger children; such as nature films, arts and crafts, games and songs
- Use enthusiastic resource people with a practical and dynamic message regarding the raising of children, safety and health, social media, healthy eating habits, or engage a dance instructor for dancing lessons for adults, or an art teacher for parents/guardians to actually produce a rendition of the model offered by the artist
- Increase Program Attendance:
  - Create enthusiastic announcements and print them in the Church bulletin
  - Invite by telephone, postcard, and personal visit and arrange for transportation, if possible
  - Arrange for baby-sitters so parents are free

- Display posters made by volunteers or students
- Conduct attendance contests, give a book or game to the class with the highest percentage of parents attending
- Send or pass out personal written invitations made in art class
- Award door prizes for being first, bringing visitors (gifts may be solicited from resources in community)

10. Possible Topics of Interest for Newsletters, Guest Speakers, Articles, Programs

*To believe that the Son of God assumed our human flesh means that each human person has been taken up into the very heart of God. The Joy of the Gospel, Pope Francis*

- Family prayer ideas of holiday celebrations or traditions
- Family budgeting
- Communication in the family
- Building positive self-concepts
- Parental role in academic achievement
- Positive discipline
- Adolescence
- Health issues
- Multi-cultural appreciation
- Providing a routine for your child
- Emotional health
- Child abuse
- Latch-key children
- Drugs
- Peer pressure
- Lunch ideas
- Nutrition
- Parenting tips

11. How Can Room Parents Help?

Room parents can be very helpful in the overall school program. Usually they are selected by the Home and School Committee in consultation with the teachers.

They may serve for a month, a quarter, a semester or entire year.

Room parents can help with the following:

- Bulletin boards
- Field trips
- Parties
- Duplicating material

## 12. Ideas for Teacher Appreciation Week

Here are some popular activities Home and School Associations conduct to show appreciation for teachers during this special week.

- Something special is done for teachers each day of the week.
- Teachers are treated to lunch at a local restaurant while volunteers supervise classrooms.
- Notes (or pictures) of appreciation collected from parents and students are given to teacher in a special sack or basket.
- A banner hangs over school entryway: "Teacher Appreciation Week "SUPER Teachers Work Here".
- Teachers are given an afternoon off, with volunteers filling in – a good time for students to make something for teachers.
- Breakfast is served to the staff at their morning worship.
- An all-constituent potluck supper to honor teachers.
- Parents of students provide lunch for students and teachers.
- Decorate a bulletin board in honor of Teacher Appreciation Week.
- Host a breakfast or luncheon for the teachers and staff.
- Present teachers with flower arrangements, plants, small gifts or certificates to show your Home and School Association's appreciation.
- Plan a program to honor the teachers and staff.
- Send a press release or a letter to the editor of your local newspaper highlighting the events your Home and School will be holding during the week.
- Have students make posters for Teacher Appreciation Week. Give the students a theme or title to develop. Display the posters throughout the school or at local businesses.
- Middle grades or junior high students can write a "teacher appreciation recipe" which includes descriptive "recipe" ingredients that describe their

teacher. Be sure to have a few samples written and a list of common recipe words and directions for their use.

- With the cooperation of the principal, encourage students to produce a short video broadcast on the subject of teacher appreciation and the value of teachers. Allow the students to be creative. Assign a volunteer to oversee the script writing and supervise the recording. The end result can be shown at a school assembly held in honor of Teacher Appreciation Week.

### 13. Resources

*Home and School News* is produced five times a year by the Upper Columbia Conference

*NAEYC National Parent Teacher Association*

(National Association for 312-670-6782

the Education of Young Children) <http://www.pta.org> <http://www.naeyc.org>