



Guidelines for Saint Michael Parish School Commission

(As of January 2025)

School Commission

The life and words of Jesus make the mission of the Catholic Church clear:

- Proclaim the Good News of God's saving love for all people.
- Establish a prayerful community of believers.
- Give practical expression to the Gospel message by serving the needs of others.

Catholic Schools are an integral part of the Church's mission to proclaim the Gospel — message and translate this proclamation into action. They are faith-centered communities that encourage participation in liturgy and sacrament. They are engaged in addressing community problems and serving those in need.

The Second Vatican Council urged that agencies be established by which laity could be consulted about what concerns the good of the Church. Within the Catholic Schools, that agency is the School Commission. The role as a member of the school commission is more important than ever. As community leaders, you are responsible for patiently and conscientiously directing the entire range of educational programs within the parish's school. This service is essential to the mission of the Catholic Church.

Our Mission

The schools of the Archdiocese of Seattle, in communion with the Archbishop, in collaboration with parents, parish leadership, and the community, and in the service of teaching Gospel values and the faith of the Catholic Church, educate students in grades K through 12 for leadership and service to the church and society through excellent religious, academic, and co-curricular programs that strive to be accessible to all.

School Leadership

According to the Second Vatican Council, the Archbishop of each Archdiocese is the educational and spiritual leader of each parish and Catholic school. Because he cannot be everywhere, he appoints a pastor to oversee the ministries of each parish. The pastor is the chief administrator of all parish programs, including the Catholic School.

The principal, whose authority is delegated within his or her employment contract and job description, is primarily responsible for the operation of the school. That responsibility includes employing, supervising, and evaluating the school's staff, establishing academic programs, and evaluating student behavior. The principal also serves as executive officer of the School Commission and the parent organization.

The Responsibility of the School Commission

The overall purpose of the School Commission is to advise and support the pastor and principal as they form policy and direct the ongoing development of the school. The Commission is advisory in nature —the operating principle is that the school or parish administrators accept the advice of the Commission when given, especially when

consensus is reached. When the advice is not taken, it is customary, but not required for the administrators to let the Commission members know the reason.

The advisory process is collaborative. The Commission's role is to make the principal as effective as possible, giving him or her the benefit of the Commission's collective wisdom. The areas of responsibility may include:

1. Establishing a mission statement and strategic plan

A mission statement identifies what the School Commission is called to do by the parish and the Archdiocesan Church. By carefully drafting this statement, you can work together with these groups toward providing quality education for your school's students.

The mission statement should be complemented by a long-range plan. The long-range plan is a set of goals and objectives that identify the overall direction for the school during the next few years. The mission statement and long-range plan provide a blueprint principal, pastor, and School Commission toward its long-term works toward objectives implementing these with goals together.

2. Recommending and defending policy

School Commission members are also charged with recommending general policies for the school. Policies must not be overly specific—it is up to the principal to conduct and implement the policy guidelines. Policy is a guide for discretionary action; it tells people what is expected, but not how to accomplish it. It could be a solution to a problem or the opportunity to set guidelines for a new program, such as technology, or a response to Archdiocesan or state requirements. The guidelines below should be followed when implementing the policy:

- Response to or anticipate the educational needs of the school community
- State the policy's thought in clear, simple, non-technical language
- Archive policies in a permanent place that is easily accessible
- Index the policy systematically
- Communicate the policy to all the Commission's publishes - especially those who are directly affected
- Evaluate the policy regularly. The pastor can make the policy effective by signing the School Commission's meeting minutes. They the policy is placed in the handbook.

3. Developing a plan and means to finance school programs

The principal works with the parish finance committee to prepare the expenditure side of the budget and School Commission members are responsible for developing a plan to generate revenue. This includes setting tuition, negotiating parish subsidies, determining development and fundraising revenues, as well as allocating resources to the budget. School Commission members assist the finance council in the budget process as follows:

- Analyze and discuss the proposed budget.

- Identify funding resources and the total amount needed from tuition, fundraising, the parish, and the development office.
- Other tasks as determined by the principal and/or pastor

4. Providing optimal public relations

As leaders of the school community, the School Commission is the school's greatest advocate in the community. School Commission members must understand the school's mission and vision. They are committed to its success. The School Commission must listen to the needs of the school's constituents and effectively communicate on behalf of the school.

5. Evaluating your own effectiveness

Periodically, the Commission is responsible for evaluating their relationships with the principal and determining their effectiveness in achieving the set goals. The School Commission is also responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of the School Commission as a whole, but not responsible for evaluating individual commission or staff members.

6. Participating in the selection process of the principal

The pastor may invite the School Commission to serve on the search committee when a new principal needs to be hired. It is this search committee, assisted by the Catholic Schools Department, which makes a consensus recommendation to the pastor as to who should fill the principal's position. The pastor, however, hires the principal.

Eligibility Requirements for the School Commission Members

As School Commission members, you know that the parish places its educational aspirations in your hands and entrusts you with shaping the school's future. School Commission members should be chosen using the following criteria:

- Have a genuine interest in Catholic education
- Be active within the parish and/or a parent of one of the schoolchildren
- Be able to remain objective but influence public opinion when necessary
- Be able to maintain group confidentiality
- Be willing to support commission decisions—even if they do not completely agree
- Support the Archdiocesan/parish/school philosophy and mission. Work as a group member in a spirit of cooperation and consensus

On a personal level, it is important that all Commission members recognize Catholic education as a ministry of the Church. As Commission members, you represent the wishes of the parish community. You must deliberate with justice and charity, serve willingly, and contribute your personal talents and expertise.

Roles

Pastor

As the canonical administrator of the parish, the pastor is the Commission's pastoral and spiritual leader. He must be informed about School Commission concerns, activities and plans. The pastor provides leadership to the Commission based on his knowledge of the parish community, etc. The pastor may be involved in all policy discussions and given the opportunity to share his insights. Even if he is unable to attend meetings, the Commission should keep him informed in a timely fashion, especially when it is considering a change in policy. The pastor must ratify all local policies before they are implemented. The pastor is the employer of the principal, responsible for hiring, operates supervision, evaluation, and contract renewal. All final decisions are his.

Principal

The principal is the education leader and executive officer of the School Commission, He or she is the link between the Commission and the school with the staff, students and parents. He or she shares information from these constituencies with Commission members, as well as current educational trends, assessment results, and federal and state programs. The principal's perception of the school's needs is a driving force behind all School Commission decisions. The principal will keep you, as a Commission member, informed about the operation of the school and about Archdiocesan policies and procedures. Conversely, you should provide the principal with any grass-roots information about your area of expertise that can help the principal respond to various school needs and issues.

Pastoral Council

The Pastoral Council and the School Commission are both consultative groups to the pastor. It is the School Commission's responsibility to bring any issue that goes beyond the Commission's scope to the Pastoral Council. Therefore, it is essential that communication between the two groups be clear. Ideally, a School Commission Member should serve as a liaison to the Pastoral Council.

Parish Finance Council

The school's budget is drawn up according to the parish budgetary financial policies and procedures and long-range financial planning which the pastor in consultation with the Parish Finance Council establishes. The Parish Finance Council is not responsible for determining priorities or evaluation the worth of parish programs and ministries. The Parish Finance Council oversees the annual budget development in response to priorities set forth by the pastoral council. The pastor makes the final decision on the annual budget. The principal in consultation with the School Commission has the responsibility for the effective use of the parish financial investment (the subsidy) and is accountable for keeping within budget.

Faculty

The School Commission is responsible for communicating with the faculty through the principal. Teachers and staff should feel comfortable approaching a Commission member regarding policy issues. Commission members and their contact information

will be available to the faculty via the School Commission website. It is important to remember that Commission members have no authority outside of the School Commission meeting. If a staff member approaches you with a grievance, you should refer them to the appropriate party.

Parent Club (or Parent Teacher Student Association-PTSA)

The parent club (or PTSA) is responsible for maintaining communication between the home and school, for providing a vehicle through which parents can provide service to the school (for example volunteers and fund-raising), for offering a mechanism for parent education, and for serving as a structure for political action when needed (for example, letter writing, phone calls, and visits to legislators). The School Commission collaborates closely with the officers of the Parent Club to understand parent needs and concerns more fully. It is frequent practice to have an officer from the Parent Club to serve as an ex officio member or as a consultant to the School Commission to ensure both good communication and commitment. The School Commission collaborates with the fund-raising groups as a part of their task of coordinating the overall financing of programs for the school. It uses the communication mechanism of the Parent Club to report Commission activities to the school families.

Community

Because of your unique role in knowing the school, the opportunity to promote the school to various groups is always there, although there should be a standing committee for public relations. All School Commission members should be encouraged to promote the school whenever possible.

School Commission Meetings

The first and most crucial step in preparing for the meeting is developing an agenda. The agenda identifies the issues to be dealt with at the meeting and encourages orderly discussion. The principal and chairperson work together to prepare this document.

The agenda, and with other written documentation, should be disseminated far enough in advance of the meeting to allow you to come prepared. As a result, the meeting will run more smoothly and be more productive.

A standard School Commission meeting should last one and a half hours to two hours. At these meetings, policy and other decisions are reached. Although not all decisions will be unanimous, it is important that each member support the decision, even if he or she did not endorse the decision.

Original Version Signed

Name

Signature

Fr. Chad Hill, Priest administrator Chad Hill

Michael J. Doyle, chair

Michael J. Doyle

Carolyn Juergens / committee member

Carolyn Juergens

Mitch Dietz commission member

Mitch Dietz

Joel Isaacson commission member

Joel Isaacson

Sarah Davis commission member

Sarah Davis

Tiffany Ames - Commission Member

Tiffany Ames

Dana Lashley, Principal

Dana Lashley
