



Little Disciples Preschool

414 North Main Street, Pontiac, Illinois 61764

Phone 815-844-6585 Fax 815-844-6987

Father Joseph Baker, Pastor

Mrs. Karen Jones, Principal

Little Disciples Preschool Student/Parent Handbook 2024-2025

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SCHOOL PERSONNEL

Administration and Faculty

Fr. Joseph Baker, Pastor

Mrs. Karen Jones, Principal

Mrs. Carol Hepner, Preschool Director

Mrs. Jordi Cavanagh, Preschool Paraprofessional

Mrs. Kelly Krenz, Director of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

Mr. Adam Lawrence, Physical Education

Mrs. Ellen Yedinak, Music

Staff

Mrs. Danielle MacZura, Administrative Assistant

Mrs. Danielle Gill, Director of Development

Mrs. Donna Gray, Business Manager

Mr. Mark Corrigan, Maintenance Director

CATHOLIC SCHOOL STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

“From the first 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, an environment permeated with the Gospel spirit of love and freedom....”

The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, #25

Catholic schools in the Diocese of Peoria are established to assist the Bishop and Pastors in the transmission of the faith to the young people of the diocese. We welcome non-Catholic students into our schools who wish to take advantage of the opportunities provided by Catholic education. Every school’s main goal must be to help each student develop a personal and ecclesial relationship with our Lord, Jesus Christ, who is “the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (John 14:6). The principles, practices, and beliefs of the Catholic Faith must be fully integrated throughout the school’s curricular service projects, co-curricular activities, and culture.

Students in our Catholic schools are reminded of their dignity as children of God through the study of Catholic Doctrine, frequent opportunities for personal and communal prayer, and active participation in the sacramental life of the Church. Together with parents, the primary educators of their children, our Catholic schools pursue academic and spiritual excellence by helping students to develop their intellectual abilities, foster wholesome friendships, practice discipleship, strengthen their daily prayer life, grow in virtue, and become leaders through serving others.

All personnel that work in our Catholic schools must have at heart the promotion of the educational mission of the Church, and live as visible role models of faith within the parish/school community. Catholic doctrinal, moral and social teaching is an integral part of each school. Therefore, all faculty, staff, administrative, and volunteer personnel must support the teachings of the Church, actively practice their faith in daily life, and be loyal to the Church’s Magisterium. Our Catholic school personnel share this educational mission and its various commitments and responsibilities with parents and the local Church communities.

“It is crucial that the policies and procedures of Catholic schools reflect that primary purpose and that the Catholicity of the school and its faithfulness to the teaching authority of the Catholic Church (Magisterium) are not compromised.”

Sister Mary Angela Shaughnessy, SCN, JD, PhD

MISSION STATEMENT OF ST. MARY'S SCHOOL

“As part of the evangelization mission of St. Mary's Parish, St. Mary's School is dedicated to teaching children to know, love, and serve God, to developing their spiritual, academic, social, and physical gifts, and to promoting responsible Catholic Christian citizenship.” (Commission on Education, 12/12/06)

School Philosophy

St. Mary's School is a Catholic co-educational community where human culture and knowledge, illuminated by Faith, is shared. Here, students are helped to develop a sense of God, responsibility, direction, and mission.

Vision Statement

St. Mary's School is a religiously devout community committed to enriching the lives of students through knowing, loving, and serving God. The students will achieve academic success through creative teaching strategies, increased technology, and an up-to-date curriculum based upon the National Common Core Standards of Learning. The school will offer a wide range of extracurricular activities that support social interactions, physical development, and creative expressions. The students will also continue their commitment to the service of others within our community and surrounding areas. St. Mary's School will challenge each family to live faithfully through participation in weekly Mass, daily prayers, and the sacramental life of our universal Church.

Belief Statements

- We believe students, parents, faculty, and staff work together to create a loving community where students are valued, welcomed, and empowered to reach their potential.
- We believe that parents must be actively involved with the school and parish in order for their child to receive the full benefits of a faith-filled school.
- We believe all students can learn and succeed in an environment that provides exceptional learning experiences, while considering different learning styles and development stages.
- We believe students will develop a love and knowledge of God through the sacraments and the teachings of the Catholic Church.
- We believe all students can grow spiritually, intellectually, socially, and physically in a safe, nurturing environment rich in Catholic faith and traditions.
- We believe Mass attendance and daily prayer enrich every aspect of our lives.
- We believe that service to others is important to the growth and development of each child as a whole person. Service to others, inside and outside the school and parish community, enhances a child's awareness of the social concerns of others.
- We believe co-curricular activities contribute to the development of the individual, socially and academically, while improving school and community relationships.

The ABC's of Little Disciples Preschool

ADMISSIONS

Parents must submit the following at the time of registration:

- Copy of birth certificate
- Completed registration forms
- Non-refundable registration fee

Acceptance will not be granted until registration requirements are met. All students must have a current physical and immunization records on file in the school office by the first day of school.

ADMISSION ELIGIBILITY

No child shall be refused admission on the basis of religion, race, gender, or ethnic origin. In order to remain fair to St. Mary's parishioners and employees, while providing a Catholic education to as many Catholic students as possible, the following priority list will be used for enrollment to Little Disciples Preschool if registration exceeds capacity:

1. Children whose parents are employees of St. Mary's Church or School.
2. Children whose siblings are already attending St. Mary's School & whose parents are practicing Catholic parishioners of St. Mary's Church.
3. Children of practicing Catholic parishioners of St. Mary's Church who are enrolling their first child.
4. Children of practicing Catholic families from parishes that have no school of their own.
5. Children of non-practicing Catholic families or children of non-Catholic families whose siblings already attend St. Mary's School.
6. Children of non-practicing Catholic families or children of non-Catholic families who are enrolling their first child.

* Parishioner is defined as one who fulfills their Mass attendance obligations and regularly supports St. Mary's Parish according to their means.

AGE REQUIREMENT

Children must be three years old by September 1.

ARRIVAL

Class starts at 8:00 a.m. Children can be dropped off anytime between 7:30 and 8:00 a.m. at the MPR doors in the school parking lot.

ATTENDANCE

In case of an absence, parents are to notify the school office by 8:30 a.m. For the safety of our students, if parents have not notified the school when a child is absent, the office staff will make an attempt to contact the parents at home and/or at work. If your child will be late or needs to leave early, please send a note or email your child's teacher ahead of time.

BATHROOM READINESS

Children must be fully potty-trained to attend Little Disciples Preschool. Our preschool program expects parent cooperation with their child's bathroom readiness. To be fully potty-trained means not having consistent accidents and being able to wipe him/herself after using the toilet. Teachers are not able to assist children with wiping. Please note that wearing Pull-ups is not considered being fully potty-trained and therefore Pull-ups are not allowed. Parents are asked to send a

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complete change of clothes appropriate for the season in case of an occasional accident. Parents will be notified if a child has an accident.

If a child is not completely potty-trained when preschool starts, parents will need to withdraw the child. The child's name will be placed at the top of our waiting list. Registration fees will not be refunded, however, if the child re-enrolls later in the year fees will not be charged again.

BIRTHDAYS

Birthdays are a very special day for every child. Talk with your child's teacher at least one week in advance if you wish to send special snacks. Please be aware of students with allergies when sending birthday treats. If you are having a party for your child and are only inviting a few children from class, we ask that you mail invitations to avoid hurt feelings. However, if you're inviting the entire class we will be happy to put the invitations in the students' backpacks.

CHAIN OF COMMAND

In keeping with church principles of subsidiarity, complaints should be solved at the lowest level possible. Persons with concerns should first attempt to address the concern with the teacher. Only after such attempts have failed should the administration be contacted. The Pastor should only be contacted if all concerns have not been satisfied through the classroom teacher and school administration. If a parent wishes to communicate with a teacher, he/she is encouraged to make an appointment. Spontaneous visits to classrooms are discouraged. All faculty members may be contacted through school email or by leaving a message in the school office.

CLASS SIZE

St. Mary's School will limit the number of students in Little Disciples Preschool to a maximum of 20 students. The Principal reserves the right to make changes to this policy if warranted.

COMMUNICATION

Your child's teacher will check their email daily. This is a good way to send any questions or comments you might have. Please check your email regularly for bulletins, announcements, and reminders. Teachers have 24 hours to respond to emails.

CONFERENCES

Parent-Teacher Conferences will be held in late-October for all school families. Conferences may be scheduled throughout the school year if the teacher or parent deems necessary.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The faculty and staff of St. Mary's School are mandated to maintain the confidentiality of personal, academic, health, and financial records. Parents, the custodial parent, or the legal guardian will be involved in any decisions to share information with District #429 or the Livingston County Special Services Unit in the event that their child requires special services. Teachers and administrators will keep confidential information entrusted to them as long as no one's life, health, and/or safety is at stake. Moreover, confidential information is entrusted with teachers and administrators as mandated by law and Diocesan policies in regard to the Safe Environment Program.

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

It is the policy of the Diocesan Office of Catholic Education and this school that NO CORPORAL PUNISHMENT be administered by the principal, faculty, or staff.

CURRICULUM

Little Disciples Preschool is a Christ-centered, structured and play-based learning environment. We enrich students' lives by offering them hands-on experiences, encouraging social-emotional skills, and bringing the awareness of Christ into their rapidly expanding world. Your child will develop age-appropriate academic skills in math, science, and language through a wide variety of activities. Our caring and professionally trained staff will, in partnership with the family, develop the skills each child needs to have success in kindergarten.

CUSTODY ISSUES

In cases where the custody of a child resides with only one parent or is shared by separated or divorced parents, a copy of the custody agreement or court order should be placed in the child's school records so that school officials are aware of the arrangement. In cases where a child is not allowed to be picked up from school by one of the parents, a written statement signed and dated by the custodial parent must be presented to the school principal.

DIOCESAN POLICIES

St. Mary's School follows Diocesan Policies D-147 Bullying, C-401 Harassment, C-402 Sexual Abuse Allegations, and C-407 Code of Pastoral Conduct. Copies of these policies can be found at cdop.org.

DISCIPLINE

We believe children can be taught self-discipline skills as a part of the total school curriculum. To this end, the school implements a positive approach to discipline based on the developmental level of the student. The two goals of discipline are to maintain safety and order within the community, and to identify, teach, and practice the skills necessary to be self-disciplined. With this in mind, discipline is not punishment, but rather an opportunity to teach a skill that is not yet developed. We expect students to conduct themselves in a manner that is becoming of a Catholic student and exhibit self-disciplined behavior at all times, on or off campus, in conformity with the norms of this handbook. The Preschool Director and Principal are the final recourse in all disciplinary situations. In preschool, we work to eliminate any potential problems before they happen. Our staff expresses appropriate respect and affection for the children and model positive social interaction and expression of feelings. We will work together with parents to keep the lines of communication open. The school administration is committed to maintaining a safe environment for all students and staff.

In the case of persistent behavior problems, the teacher will communicate the concerns with the parents so that positive methods to promote appropriate behavior can be used at home and school. In certain situations, a parent might be asked to pick their child up and take them home. Continued discipline problems might result in the parent being asked to withdraw their child. A child may be removed from the program if:

- the child poses a threat to self, staff, or other children in the program
- the child behaves in a manner that is difficult to manage in a large group
- the child, or parent(s), use abusive language or threaten other children or staff
- the child or family continues to act against Preschool policies, as explained in the student-parent handbook
- the child's presence is adversely affecting the program

DISMISSAL

On normal school days, dismissal time is 3:00 pm. Children are to be picked up at the preschool doors on Chicago Street. We will only allow the child to leave with the persons listed on the child's registration form. Parents are required to keep this list updated. Please email or send a note to your child's teacher in the event that someone else will be picking your child.

**There is no tuition discount for choosing the earlier dismissal time. Parents cannot change their chosen dismissal time from day-to day; a set schedule must be established.*

DRESS CODE

Our preschool curriculum consists of teaching children through creative play, therefore, we paint, play with nature, and anything that will engage our creative minds. It will get messy! Children should be dressed in comfortable, washable clothing that he/she can manage in the bathroom. Please be aware of buttons, zippers and dresses that are difficult for little ones to manage in the restroom. For the sake of modesty, we do ask that all girls wear shorts under dresses and skirts. Children spend time outdoors each day and should have appropriate outdoor wear; warm outer clothing in the winter and light clothing in the spring. Sunscreen should also be applied. Children run on the playground, so we recommend socks and sneakers. Sandals and flip-flops are not permitted.

DRILLS – Fire Drills, Lockdown Drills, Tornado Drills

To keep the children safe, we will practice these drills throughout the school year.

FAITH’S LAW and CODE OF CONDUCT

The second legislation, Public Act 102-0702, will take effect on July 1, 2023. It focuses on the prevention of “sexual misconduct” as defined in the first part of the legislation (Public Act 102-0676) by school employees, substitute employees, and employees of contractors. Specifically, the Act adds employment history reviews as part of the hiring and vetting process, requires notices to be provided to parents/guardians and the applicable student when there’s an alleged act of sexual misconduct, and makes other changes to the process schools must follow when handling allegations of sexual misconduct. Public Act 102-0702 also adds that if a district superintendent has any reasonable cause to believe a license holder has committed an act of sexual misconduct, the superintendent must report this information to the state superintendent of education and the applicable regional superintendent of schools. Further, the state superintendent can initiate the process to revoke or suspend a license, endorsement, or approval issued under Article 21B for reasons including sexual misconduct. The ultimate goals of Public Act 102-0702 are to give parents/guardians notice regarding allegations of sexual misconduct that involve their student; equip schools across Illinois with better information regarding the employment history of an applicant or employee of a contractor; give schools the resources necessary to make well-informed decisions about who they are employing/contracting with; and protect students from acts of sexual misconduct by school employees, substitute employees, and employees of contractors.

School Employee Code of Professional Conduct - Diocesan Policy C-411

Pursuant to Illinois’s Faith’s Law requirements, the Diocese of Peoria adopts this Code of Professional Conduct for School Employees. Each of the provisions below is contained in existing policies and rules of the Diocese of Peoria, but are restated as a Code of Conduct for School Employees to comply with the law. Each school is required pursuant to Faith’s Law to post this Code of Professional Conduct for School Employees on the school’s website and to publish this document in the school’s parent/family/student handbook, if the school has one.

I. Educator Code of Conduct

Pursuant to recent Illinois law, the Diocese adopts the relevant portions of the Illinois Educator Code of Conduct, as follows, which applies to school employees who are certified or working toward certification or whose certification has been waived:

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Principle 1: Responsibility to Students. Educators are committed to creating, promoting, and implementing a learning environment that enables students to achieve their highest academic potential, and to succeed as a responsible member of society. They are committed to embodying standards of professionalism in the learning environment; respecting the inherent dignity and worth of each student by assuring that the learning environment is characterized by respect for each student; maintaining a professional relationship with students at all times; providing a curriculum based on high expectations for students; and fostering in each student the development of attributes that will enhance skills and knowledge necessary to be a contributing member of society.

Principle 2: Responsibility to Self. Educators are committed to establishing high professional standards and striving to meet these standards through their performance. They are committed to assuming responsibility and accountability for their performance and striving to demonstrate proficiency and currency in both content knowledge and professional practice; developing and implementing personal and professional goals with attention to professional standards through a process of self-assessment and professional development; representing their professional credentials and qualifications accurately; and using sound professional judgment.

Principle 3: Responsibility to Colleagues and the Profession. Educators are committed to collaborating with school and Diocesan colleagues and other professionals in the interest of student learning and to meet state educational standards; working together to create a respectful, professional and supportive school climate for educators to maintain their individual professional integrity; seeking out and engaging in activities that contribute to the ongoing development of the profession; encouraging promising candidates to enter the education profession; and supporting the preparation, induction, mentoring and professional development of educators.

Principle 4: Responsibility to School Parents and Families. Educators are committed to collaborating, striving to build trust, and respecting confidentiality with school parents and families striving to develop and maintain professional relationships with school parents and families; and promoting collaboration and supporting student learning through communication with parents and families.

Principle 5: Responsibility to the ISBE. Educators are committed to supporting the Administrative and School Codes as applicable to Catholic schools, state and federal laws and regulations as applicable to Catholic schools, and the Illinois State Board of Education's standards for highly qualified educators, as applicable to Catholic schools. They are committed to providing accurate communication to the Illinois State Board of Education concerning all certification matters; maintaining appropriate certification for employment; and complying with the state and federal codes, laws, and regulations that apply to Catholic schools.

Any employee who sexually harasses a student, willfully or negligently fails to report an instance of suspected child abuse or neglect as required by the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act (325 ILCS 5/), engages in grooming as defined in 720 ILCS 5/11-25, engages in grooming behaviors, violates boundaries for appropriate school employee- student conduct, engages in sexual misconduct as defined in 105 ILCS 5/22-85.5, or otherwise violates an employee conduct standard will be subject to discipline up to and including dismissal. The Catholic Diocese of Peoria and its associated schools have no tolerance for any unprofessional conduct.

II. Sexual misconduct

The Diocese's Norms for the Prohibition of Sexual Abuse of Minors and Sexual Misconduct with Adults: Education, Prevention, Assistance to Persons making a Report, Investigation, and Procedures for Determination of Fitness for Ministry/Employment, prohibits sexual abuse of minors by its employees, clergy members, and volunteers. Pursuant to Faith's Law, the Diocese has amended its Norms to add additional description of acts constituting sexual abuse of a minor:

I. Sexual misconduct, defined by Faith's Law as any verbal, nonverbal, written, or electronic communication or physical activity directed toward or with a minor for the purpose of establishing a romantic or sexual relationship with the minor, including but not limited to a sexual or romantic invitation; dating or soliciting a date; engaging in sexualized or romantic dialog; making sexually suggestive comments that are directed toward or with a minor; self-disclosure or physical exposure of a sexual, romantic, or erotic nature; and/or a sexual, indecent, romantic, or erotic contact with the minor (Illinois' Faith's Law, Public Act 102-0676, (105 ILCS 5/22-85.5).

II. Grooming behavior, defined by Faith's Law and the Illinois Criminal Code as knowingly using a computer online service, internet service, local bulletin board service, or any other device capable of electronic data storage or transmission, or performs an act in person or by conduct through a third party, or uses written communication to seduce, solicit, lure, or entice, or attempt to seduce, solicit, lure, or entice, a child, or another person believed by the person to be a child, to commit any sex offense as defined in Section 2 of the Sex Offender Registration Act, to distribute photographs depicting the sex organs of the child, or to otherwise engage in any unlawful sexual conduct with a child or with another person believed by the person to be a child.

III. Expectations of School Employees

School employees are expected to maintain professional relationships and boundaries, recognizing the age and the developmental levels of the students with whom they interact.

1. Employees are strictly prohibited from using any form of communication with students (e-mails, letters, notes, text messages, phone calls, conversations) that includes any subject matter that would be deemed unprofessional and/or inappropriate between an employee and student.
2. Employees are not permitted to transport students in the employee's privately owned vehicle, unless the employee has obtained the prior permission of the Principal to do so.
3. Employees are not permitted to take or possess a photo or video of a student on their private devices that would be construed as inappropriate.
4. Employees are expected to maintain a professional relationship in all interactions, both in and out of school.

IV. School employees are mandated reporters

The Diocese restates here the Diocese's requirement that its employees, including employees who work at diocesan elementary schools and high schools, shall report suspected child abuse and suspected child neglect to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. Pursuant to the Illinois Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act, (325 ILCS 5/4), school employees are required to make a report suspected child abuse and suspected child neglect to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services by calling the hotline number at 1-800- 25-ABUSE (1-800-252-2873)

whenever the employee has reasonable cause to believe that a child known to the employee in the employee's professional or official capacity may be abused or neglected.

V. Employee training related to child abuse and educator ethics

The Diocese requires its employees be trained annually in their obligations as mandated reporters and every three years to be trained in preventing, detecting and responding properly to sexual harassment. The trainings are entitled *DCFS's Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse: Training for Mandated Reporters*; and the *State of Illinois' Prohibition of Sexual Harassment training*. Those requirements are set forth in the *Diocese's Employee Handbook* and in the *Diocese's Safe Environment Requirements for Clergy, Adult/Teen Employees and Volunteers* whose role involves direct contact with minors. The Diocese will require its school employee educators to receive training in educator ethics. When those resources are completed, they will be shared with educators.

FIELD TRIPS

As with all school activities, field trips are part of our educational curriculum. Teachers will plan on campus field trips to places such as the church, atrium, and school library. With advance notice, teachers will plan off campus walking field trips to places such as Pontiac Public Library, Evenglow Lodge, and the Pontiac Fire Station. Trips will be planned with safety in mind.

FORGOTTEN ITEMS

If a child forgets an item at home, parents may drop that item off in the office and the office staff will make sure the child receives it. This helps limit disruptions throughout the school day.

GOD IS FIRST

As Catholics, we start and end each day with a prayer and a prayer before our meals. Our classrooms and hallways are decorated to constantly remind the children of God's love for them. Preschool students will spend time in the Atrium each week for Catechesis of the Good Shepherd as part of our curriculum. In addition to prayer, part of each day is devoted to learning more about God and our faith, His love for us, and how He wants us to treat others.

HEALTH EXAMINATIONS AND IMMUNIZATIONS

Health Exam Required

Each student in a Catholic school in the Diocese of Peoria shall have a current health examination (dated less than one year prior to entering preschool).

Immunizations Required

Each Catholic school student shall receive such immunizations against preventable communicable diseases as are required by the Illinois School Code and the Communicable Disease Prevention Act, at the time those immunizations are required to be received, unless one of the Diocesan approved exceptions is satisfied. Please contact the school principal for more information.

ILLNESS

Do not send your child to school for 24 hours after he/she has had a fever over 100 degrees, rash, vomiting, diarrhea, or a severe cough. **THE 24 HOUR POLICY WILL BE STRONGLY ENFORCED.** If your child has a communicable disease (complete list available in the St. Mary's School Student-Parent Handbook), inform the school so parents of exposed children can be alerted. If a child becomes ill at school, the parents will be contacted. If we are unable to reach parents by phone, we will contact an authorized person listed on the emergency information sheet on file for the child. Please keep this information updated.

INJURY

Should a child become injured at school, the child will be taken to the school office and assisted accordingly. The child may need a band aid, ice applied, observation, and/or a call to the parent for emergency assistance. If we are unable to reach the parent by phone, we will call from the emergency information sheet on file for the child. Please keep this information updated.

INTERNET USE

Little Disciples Preschool supports the use of computers and the internet in its instructional program. This will allow the school to facilitate access to information, research, collaboration, and interpersonal communications. The use of computer hardware and software shall be consistent with the Catholic identity of our school, reinforce the curriculum, and reflect the varied instructional needs and learning styles of our students. Students and staff are expected to act in a responsible, ethical, and legal manner in accordance with the moral principles of the Catholic Church. Students and staff will also act according to the accepted rules of network etiquette as well as federal and state law.

LICE

Head lice are a common occurrence among young children. Head lice spreads from person to person by direct contact with hair or by sharing items such as hats, brushes, etc. Lice do not carry diseases or illnesses, they do cause a nuisance. Little Disciples Preschool has a "NO NIT/HEAD LICE" policy. This means that all nits and lice must be removed from the hair before your child may return to school. If head lice are discovered on one child, all preschool students will be checked. Children with head lice will be sent home immediately.

LUNCH

Each morning the teacher will ask students if they are having hot or cold lunch. If they bring lunch from home, they can order milk for .40 cents/carton. If they order hot lunch from Central School, the lunch is brought to St. Mary's and your lunch account is charged \$3.35. There may be other opportunities to sign-up for special lunches sponsored by parent groups throughout the year. All lunch money will be paid in advance through FACTS Management.

MEDICATION

If it becomes necessary for a child to take medication during the school day, the parent and doctor must complete a medication form from the school office. Only authorized school forms will be accepted. We do not administer medication at the preschool. All medication is stored in the school office. For more information on medication at school, please refer to the St. Mary's School Student-Parent Handbook.

OUTSIDE PLAY

Weather permitting, children will go outside. Please send them in appropriate outerwear.

PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Little Disciples Preschool recognizes the parent as the child's first and most important teacher and supports this role by providing opportunities for parents to participate in the education of their children. When parents and teachers work together, the link between home and school is strengthened. For children, parent involvement demonstrates that education and school experiences are valued. For parents, classroom participation provides an opportunity to gain insight and understanding of child development and supports the development of parenting skills useful in everyday interactions with children. Parent participation means a greater investment and greater return. The cooperative efforts of parents and teachers working together provide the best learning environment for young children.

PICTURES

Pictures and/or videos of the children at work and play will be taken on a regular basis. Photographs and recordings may be shared via (including but not limited to): school & church bulletins and newsletters, publications, advertising materials, school yearbook, local & Diocesan newspapers, school & church website, social media, and school & church YouTube channels. In the registration packet, parents are asked to declare if their child's photo, video, and/or name can be shared. We will also have a photographer come to school in the Fall to take school pictures of the children. Purchase of these photos is optional.

REST TIME

Students will have rest time every afternoon. The school will provide a cot for each student. Parents are asked to send a sheet and large towel that will be kept at school all year. Sheets and towels will be laundered at school each week.

SMOKE-FREE ENVIRONMENT

The use of tobacco or vaping by any school personnel, student, volunteer, or other person is prohibited within the St. Mary's School building or on school grounds when students are present. Tobacco is defined as cigarette, cigar, or tobacco in any other form, including smokeless tobacco that is intended to be placed in the mouth without being smoked.

SNACKS

Students will be offered snacks each morning. Parents will be asked to send store-bought, prepackaged healthy snacks to school. Some examples of acceptable snacks are: pretzels, cheese, and fresh fruit/vegetables. More information will be given in the classroom newsletter.

TUITION AND FEES

Fees

Facts Management charges families an annual fee for account maintenance. The fee for new students is \$22 and returning students is \$11. St. Mary's School charges a \$100 per child, non-refundable, registration fee. These fees are paid online when applying for admission.

Tuition

The base rate tuition for each student, regardless of faith, will be determined annually by the Parish Finance Council. **The base rate tuition for 2024-2025 is \$4,400.** This fee may be paid in installments through FACTS. If a child leaves the school during the academic year and tuition has been paid in full, tuition will be prorated for the months the student was not in attendance.

Payment Plans

Parents/guardians are responsible for creating an account with FACTS Management. Tuition payments will be made through FACTS. Families will choose one of the following installment plans:

- One payment – due in August
- Two payments – due in August and February
- Ten payments – due every month from August through May
- Twelve payments – due every month July through June

Families may choose a due date of the 5th or 20th of the month.

Delinquent Accounts

The following actions will be taken according to duration of outstanding balances:

- Upon delinquency: Parent/guardian must contact the school office to make arrangements.

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- 30-days overdue: Child will not be permitted to attend class until the account is up to date.
- 60-days overdue: Child may be dismissed from the program.

Other Fee Policies

- Preschool students do not count toward the K-8 multi-student discount at St. Mary's School.
- Preschool scholarships are not available at this time.
- Any family who disables their FACTS account will be subject to dismissal from the program.
- All payments returned for insufficient funds will incur a \$30 charge.
- Students enrolled for part of a month will owe tuition for the entire month.
- Registration will not be accepted for the next school year until all debts owed have been paid. If tuition becomes delinquent after early registration, the child(ren) will be considered conditional until all debts have been paid from the previous year.

VOLUNTEERS

There are many volunteer opportunities available to parents. Every volunteer must complete the Safe Environment Training Program as mandated by the Diocese of Peoria. Visit our website and complete the necessary steps. All volunteers must sign-in at the school office.

WEAPONS

St. Mary's School is mandated to follow Diocesan Policy D-150, entitled "Possession or Use of Weapons or Look Alike Weapons in School." The policy is as follows:

Catholic schools in the Diocese of Peoria teach and uphold the sanctity of human life. Virtues such as respect for others, peacemaking, and self-discipline are foundations of Catholic education. Furthermore, a safe academic and social environment is essential for learning and Christian formation. The possession or use of weapons not only disrupts the school's learning environment, it fundamentally violates the sanctity of human life by threatening the very health and safety of teachers and students. Therefore, diocesan schools have zero tolerance towards weapons.

It is strictly forbidden for any student to possess, use, attempt to use, manufacture, distribute, purchase, trade or sell (or seek the sale or trade of) any weapon on school premises or at any school-related activity or function, including but not limited to travel to and from school and/or school-related functions. Possession means having a weapon on one's person or in an area subject to the student's control such as desks, lockers, backpacks, and vehicles. Any student possessing, using, attempting to use, manufacturing, distributing, purchasing, trading or selling (or seeking the sale or trade of) weapons at school or any school-related function shall, at the discretion of the pastor and principal, be subject to immediate expulsion. Further information on this policy can be found in our St. Mary's School Student-Parent Handbook.

WEATHER CLOSINGS

Sudden weather changes during the winter may make it necessary to close school. If weather problems should arise prior to or during the school day, an announcement will be made using the Facts Management alert system. Generally, whatever is announced for Pontiac Grade School District #429 and Pontiac Township High School will apply also to St. Mary's School. If school is canceled during the day, children will be given an opportunity to call their parents to make arrangements. Parents are encouraged to have a family plan for such occurrences. Because conditions may vary depending on location, parents are free to pick up their children if school is not canceled but conditions in their home area necessitate early dismissal.