

Notre Dame of Easton Religious Education

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2019-2020 Program Policies and Guidelines for Grades 1 thru 5 @ Samuel Staples Elementary School and Grades 6 and 7 @ Helen Keller Middle School

Mass Attendance:

Students are expected to attend Mass every weekend, whether at Notre Dame of Easton or at another Catholic Church. This is especially important for those students who are preparing to receive the Sacraments of First Reconciliation, First Holy Communion, and Confirmation. The classroom message is strengthened by participation in our communal worship at Mass. Greater participation of families in all parish liturgies is strongly encouraged. All Masses become more meaningful and our children's spiritual development is enhanced by their active participation.

Student Behavior:

Students are to treat their teachers and classmates with respect and courtesy at all times.

When problem behavior goes unchecked, it likely continues. Disruptive behavior affects the learning atmosphere for the entire class. Experience has taught us that parental notification must be made as soon as disruptive behavior occurs. It is difficult to recruit and/or retain our volunteer Catechists when they must deal with behavioral issues in addition to teaching. Furthermore, it is our responsibility to make sure that an environment exists for students to learn rather than be distracted by either bad or disruptive behavior or attempts to establish order. It is a parent's obligation to set clear expectations with their children about Religious Education class behavior. Our teachers will be encouraged to bring problems to our collective attention immediately.

The following steps will be taken when disruptive behavior occurs:

1) At the first instance of disruptive behavior, the Catechist will contact the Director of Religious Education. The Director will contact the child's parent(s) by telephone or by e-mail to inform them of the nature of the behavior. 2) If the problem continues, we will notify parents that their child will be transferred to the home school program. Completed home school unit tests will be required for all units studied after transfer to home schooling.

Any student who bullies another child(ren) or threatens to inflict harm on any persons or property will be immediately home schooled. The Pastor and Director of Religious Education reserve the right of deciding when and if that child will be permitted back into the classroom setting.

All rules for behavior that apply in Staples and Keller schools, as outlined in those respective public school handbooks, also apply to behavior expected for students in our Religious Education classes.

Serious violation of any of the above will quickly result in suspension from the program.

Parents are responsible for damage done to school property by their child(ren). No student will be permitted to leave the classroom without the permission of the Catechist. No material or equipment in the classroom is to be touched. Students are to use only the top of the desk to which they are assigned by the Catechist and **not** desk contents - **even if it is the desk assigned to them during the public school day.** Only books, pencils, etc. brought in and distributed by our Catechists, and materials from the student's own back pack are to be utilized during our Religious Education class time. Students are to take any materials that they brought to Religious Education class with them when they vacate the room.

Gathering and Dismissal:

Religious Education classes for both Samuel Staples Elementary School and Helen Keller Middle School meet on Tuesday afternoons and follow the public school calendar, except our classes begin October 1, 2019. Classes for the 8th grade begin Monday, September 23, 2019.

Samuel Staples Elementary School:

Our students will remain in their classrooms until all buses have been called. **The Catechists for SSES will arrive in the cafeteria by 3:30pm** and will go to their assigned classrooms after the call for the final bus. Students will meet their Catechist in the hallway and will be escorted to the Religious Education classroom. **Students may eat a snack provided from home before class begins** and are required to keep their area tidy. Trash must be placed in the receptacles for each classroom.

Children are to be picked up by an adult in the small gym promptly at 5:00pm. The person picking up your child must be 18 years of age or older. If the person picking up is younger than 18, the Religious Education Office requires a signed waiver releasing Notre Dame of Easton from all responsibility and liability regarding the dismissal.

As required by the SSES administration, parents may not leave the small gym to enter the school at any time. Parents must enter and exit by way of the small gym entrance.

The Director or assistant on duty will remain with the student until 5:15pm. Please make every effort to pick up your child at the dismissal time. After 5:15pm children who have not been picked up by a parent or guardian may be transported to the Easton Police Dept. Also remember that the fire lanes are not to be obstructed with your vehicle while you are inside the school.

Those children going to the extended day care program will be escorted to that location.

If, on occasion, your child needs to be picked up earlier than the normal dismissal time you must contact the Office of Religious Education before 2:00pm on that Tuesday to advise the planned pick-up time. Your child will be required to make up work missed. We encourage parents to schedule appointments and outside activities so there is no conflict with Religious Education.

If someone other than the usual pick-up person is asked to bring your children home for a given week, please let the Catechist know that it is "OK" to release your child to that person by way of a note sent with your child that day.

Helen Keller Middle School:

All Notre Dame Catechists for HKMS will be in their assigned sections of the cafeteria at 2:40pm.

Our students will report each Tuesday afternoon **directly** to the cafeteria where their Catechist will be waiting to greet them and take attendance before leading them quietly and orderly to their assigned classroom. Children are to meet their Catechist in the cafeteria and are not to go to their Religious Education classroom un-escorted. Please stress with your child(ren) that no loitering is permitted in the hallways. Each space occupied by a class, whether cafeteria or classroom, should be left in a clean, neat condition. Students are not to go into any other area of the building without permission or supervision. The faculty room is strictly off limits to all.

HKMS children must be picked up promptly at 4:00pm. Dismissal from Religious Education will follow the same procedure as dismissal from daily class at HKMS. Parents will pick up their child(ren) from Religious Education at the Lower Loop/Parent Pick-up Loop. Students may not be dismissed early without a written note or phone call from a parent/ guardian. **A note is also required giving permission for a child to walk to the ECC or to walk home from Religious Education, regardless of whether the child has this privilege after the regular school day.** The note should indicate if permission is for a specific Tuesday or for the academic year. The note will be kept on file for school-district and Office of Religious Education reference.

Helen Keller Middle School (Cont'd.)

The person picking up your child should be 18 years of age or older. If the person picking up is younger than 18, the Office of Religious Education requires a signed waiver releasing Notre Dame of Easton from all responsibility and liability regarding the dismissal.

If someone other than the usual pick-up person is asked to bring your child(ren) home for a given week, please let the Catechist know that it is "OK" to release your child to that person by way of a note sent with your child that day.

Please make every effort to pick-up your child at dismissal time at the Lower Loop/Parent Pick-up Loop at HKMS. Also remember that the fire lanes are not to be obstructed with your vehicle while you are inside the school. We anticipate stronger enforcement by the Easton Police Department. Parents must make alternate arrangements if there is any possibility that they may not be on time. **Our coordinators will stay with students for no more than fifteen minutes past our dismissal time.** Children who are not picked up by fifteen minutes past the dismissal time may be transported to the Easton Police Department.

Absence

Parents must telephone the Office of Religious Education if their child will be absent from their Religious Education class. For the safety of your children, our coordinators will call the emergency contact number for those students who are absent without notification. (This is the telephone number that you provided on the "2019-2020 Supplemental Information Schedule" when you registered your child.)

Your advanced phone call will eliminate our concern that your child's safety might have been compromised. We need parental notification before 2:00pm on Tuesdays. We leave our office to travel to the schools after 2:00 pm, and a message on our voice machine will not reach us until the next morning. The parent should request make-up material from the teacher if a student is to be absent. In the event of an extended period of absence, please contact the Director of Religious Education to discuss alternate arrangements.

If your child is absent four or more times he/she will be required to complete the appropriate tests covering the material missed.

Snacks - All Grades

All regulations in place at SSES and HKMS regarding snacks and parties will apply at Religious Ed as well. We suggest that an additional, small, simple snack item be brought from home on Tuesdays. Time is allotted for students to eat their snack before the beginning of class. Because of serious concern for students' dietary restrictions, **no foods are to be provided by our staff.** Nonetheless, please make certain that our staff is informed of any food restrictions required by your child. Because some children have food allergies so severe that they can have an anaphylactic reaction just from skin contact with or breathing near a given allergen, we ask all parents **to avoid sending their child to school with snacks containing nuts.**

Food Restrictions: Parents should alert their own child to the dangers of consuming foods to which they are allergic. Our concern for our students' safety, health and well-being compels us to ask you to direct your children not to share their snacks because of the food allergies of some of our children. Parents of children with known allergies are asked to share this confidential information with us so that we have a heightened awareness of their restrictions.

Textbooks and School Supplies

Each student is issued a Religious Education textbook at the first class. **It is the responsibility of all students to have their textbook, notepad, and pen or pencil with them for every class.** Lost books should be reported and a new book can be re-ordered at the current price through our Office of Religious Education at the parent's expense. All students will keep their textbooks at the end of the school year.

Homework

Religious Education begins in the home; parents are the “primary religious educators” of their children.

Parents are urged to have discussions with their children about their Religious Education class and homework each week. Parents’ discussion with their children not only reinforces the classroom teaching, but also indicates parental support of the Religious Education program.

Cancellation of Classes

If there is a forecast of inclement weather for a Tuesday afternoon, we will err on the side of caution and cancel Religious Education classes. We will have such cancellations announced by 11:30am on TV Channel 8 and TV Channel 12. We will also notify each family by email using the email address that is provided to the Religious Education Office on the Supplemental Information Schedule that you provided with your child(ren)’s registration.

SSES PARENTS: Please be sure to change the DISMISSAL MANAGER at SSES before noon on Tuesday if Religious Education classes are cancelled.

If there is early dismissal at the public school, Religious Education classes will be cancelled for that day.

Children with Special Needs or Schedules

Parents should contact the Office of Religious Education if their child has special needs.

Preparing for Sacraments:

In keeping with our **Bridgeport Diocesan Guidelines**, the immediate preparation for the first celebration of a Sacrament “is to be separate and in addition to participation in the ongoing parish Catechetical program.”

Immediate preparation for Sacraments of Penance, First Holy Communion, and Confirmation must be done in the Sacramental class regardless of home schooling or Catholic School attendance.

Volunteer Service:

Volunteer services by dedicated parish adults and teens, and a significant subsidy by the parish of Notre Dame of Easton, have enabled us to keep the tuition charged for our Religious Education programs to a minimum. Volunteers receive free tuition for their children enrolled in the program. **Please phone the Office of Religious Education if you are interested in becoming a Catechist.**

Conclusion:

We hope to provide a safe and loving environment for all our students.

Please know that we are committed to serving you and your family for our mutual Christian growth.

Our goal is to assist your family in its spiritual development.

May God bless your family and our year together!