

**Statement of Mary E. Rochford  
Superintendent of Schools  
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I am currently the Superintendent of Schools for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Prior to my appointment as Superintendent on July 7, 2008, I was the Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Schools and prior to that Regional Director in the Office of Catholic Education for a total of ten years in the central office. My career at the elementary level includes thirteen years as a teacher and twelve years as a school administrator.

We care deeply about the teachers in the parish and regional schools of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Our schools are schools of excellence due to our teacher dedication, expertise and daily work. Together, central office, administrators at the local school level and our teachers see this professional working relationship and vocation to bring the Gospel and faith formation to our students our continued focus.

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia is made up of two hundred seventy-one parishes over a five county area. Of the two hundred seventy-one parishes, schools are located on one hundred eighty-two of these parish properties either as individual parish schools or as a regional school composed of several parishes joining resources to provide one school entity.

The county breakdown of elementary schools is as follows for a total of 182 elementary schools:

Philadelphia County	67 schools	(7 Regional Schools)
Bucks County	28 schools	(2 Regional Schools)
Chester County	16 schools	(2 Regional Schools)
Delaware County	34 schools	(3 Regional Schools)
Montgomery County	37 schools	(3 Regional Schools)

The teaching personnel within the parish or regional schools number 3725 teachers from Grade PK through Grade 8. The following is a reflection of the years of service our teachers provide across the one hundred eighty-two elementary schools:

Teachers with 1 through 3 years of service number 1117 while teachers with 4 through 50+ years of service number 2608. The religious environment coupled with the classroom environment conducive to day long instruction keeps our teachers coming back year after year.

The process to become a teacher in a parish or regional school within the Archdiocese of Philadelphia begins with decisions made on the part of the teacher. The first of these decisions is made in response to a call to first and foremost have the desire and the ability to be an effective catechist and live in conformity with the Magisterium of the Catholic Church. The aspirations of the teacher must be to promulgate the faith both through the formal teaching of Religion as well as the integration of Catholic values throughout all aspects of the teacher's assigned responsibilities. The next decision on the part of the

teacher is to come forward and submit a teaching application either to the Office of Catholic Education or directly to the pastor of the parish with a school. Once the applicant's credentials have been received, evaluated and accepted, the applicant is given an appointment for an interview with the pastor, who eventually becomes the employer at the local level and will work directly with the principal who is the overseer of the school program. If the interview process concludes with a mutual agreement for hire, the applicant is offered a particular grade level at the local school as well as a clearly defined contract with salary and benefits reviewed with the prospective teacher. The pastor and newly hired teacher will then enter into a verbal or written contract for a one year period renewable from year to year as successful teaching practices are demonstrated. At the time of hire, the teacher receives a reflective publication entitled "Education and Faith: Faith and Life". I present that to you today in attached pamphlet.

One of the first subtopics in this booklet notes the teacher's choice to teach in a Catholic school and viewing it as a vocation. From the text of Education and Faith, Faith and Life, I quote, "Certain broad considerations should underlie the discussions which lead to mutual understandings among teachers, pastor(s) and the parish community or parish communities with regional schools which they serve. The rights and needs common to lay teachers and to their state in life include:

1) The right and need to be treated with dignity as person and as teacher.

**Note: Our elementary administrators as well as the elementary staff in the Office of Catholic Education consistently support the classroom teacher expressing gratitude and, beyond salary, providing measures within the school that underscore the dignity of their work as well as gratitude for the same. The teacher is held up to the parent, school and parish community as a person to be emulated, appreciated, respected and supported.**

2) The need for assurance of reasonable job security, and the right to that job security after having proven their competence as teachers. This and other rights extend beyond the terms of office of individual pastors or individual principals.

**Note: Teachers who successfully fulfill the responsibilities of their teaching assignments are very much reassured of their long lasting place on a particular faculty until that time the enrollment decline could cause an adjustment to the school configuration. If grade levels are constricted, the school closes or regionalizes, the teachers are immediately assisted through the Office of Catholic Education to secure positions in other parish or regional schools within a reasonable distance of the affected school and teacher.**

3) The need for assurance that records are maintained by the parish which accurately reflects their past devoted service as teachers in that parish community or regional school.

**Note: Accurate records of each teacher's employ are kept at the local level. When and if a teacher changes schools by choice or by constriction, the file transfers to the new school minus any disciplinary records. If a school closes and the teacher is not immediately re-hired, the records are kept in the Office of Catholic Education.**

4) The need to have a clear explanation of their duties and responsibilities as teachers in the parish or regional school, as well as a clear understanding of the appropriate grounds upon which that service may be terminated.

**Note: The teacher is aware by signed or verbal contract of the grade level teaching responsibilities he/she accepts at the time of hire. A faculty handbook at the local school level clearly indicates the responsibilities of the teacher from the expectations within the classroom to fulfill the teaching assignment as well as expected participation in other areas in the life of the school. Except in matters involving violations of the "Cardinal's Clause," teachers in the parish and regional schools are protected with a disciplinary process that calls for three written warnings describing the unsatisfactory attitude, behavior or teaching deficiency. The administrator must work with the individual teacher for a period of time prescribing supports and expectations to make the weak area one of ever increasing strength. Adequate time is given between written warnings so that the teacher has the opportunity to improve. If at the end of the three written warnings, the necessary improvement is not shown, the teacher can be terminated. The teacher, after two or more years of service, can request an Appeal of the termination. The teacher must gain permission from the pastor for the appeal to be heard. To the knowledge of the staff in the Office of Catholic Education during the past ten years, at the elementary level, there has been one appeal requested and one appeal held. The Appeal Board is created once the pastor gives permission. The Appeal Board is made up of 2 representatives from the Pastors' Board, two principals, two lay teachers and one member from the Staff in the Office of Catholic Education. The decision of the Appeal Board is binding on all parties and may not be appealed further.**

5) The right of teachers who have established their competency to due process through a grievance procedure, in situations affecting their continued employment.

**Note: See above.**

6) The right to be able to express their concerns and needs as persons, educators, and committed believers, individually or through their representatives, to the principal, to the pastor(s), and through him (them) to the parish community or parish communities, if that is appropriate.

**Note: Teachers are always welcome to meet with the pastor and/or principal when situations arise in the school. If a certain situation needs to be presented to one of the parish or school representative groups such as the Parish Council, Finance Council or Home/School Executive Board, this permission would be granted by the pastor and principal as appropriate. If a teacher chose to speak to someone in the Office of Catholic Education, phone calls and letters are always welcome and dealt with in a timely manner. Over the past ten years, a very small number of letters or phone calls have been received in our office from teaching personnel. For those that have been received, dialogue was initiated with the teacher, the administrator and if necessary the pastor to work toward an amicable resolution.**

**Teachers are also given the avenue within the school to raise concerns privately to the principal, put points of discussion on the faculty meeting agendas as well as meet with the pastor as needed. At the elementary level, supportive relationships are an ongoing focus so that, together, the professional personnel within the building work toward a Christ –filled work and learning environment for adults and for students.**

7) The right to adequate provision for their personal needs, within the ability of the parish or regional school to meet those needs. Such needs, in addition to salary, include adequate provision for old age, sickness and death.

**Note: Teachers are given ten sick days per year which can be accumulated to a maximum of sixty-five days. The sixty-five accrued days as well as the weekend days between will provide the teacher with the ninety days needed to go on short term disability leading to long-term disability if required. All teachers are vested in the Archdiocesan pension plan after five years of service. The former time frame on vesting was ten years and was adjusted to be more in line with current organizational policies. Teachers are also granted two personal days per year and bereavement time as needed. Additional times for other personal needs are discussed at the local level with the pastor and principal working to assist the teacher when and how they are able.**

**Salaries have been increased at a steady rate of between 3 and 4 percent over the past five years. The greatest challenge to the salary level is the direct impact salaries have on the tuition costs of the school. As salaries rise, tuition costs rise and enrollment is directly impacted. This ripple effect is seen as classrooms are consolidated and teaching positions constricted. The parishes determine how much of the health care cost the teachers need to assume. This depends upon the resources of the parish and its ability to keep these costs low for the teachers. Every effort is made to favor the teacher in setting the necessary percentage due from the teacher to cover the health care costs. A \$10,000 death benefit currently exists for all teachers with the ability of the teacher to pay into increasing this dollar figure.**

A 70% re-hire rate proudly underscores the desire of the majority of the elementary teachers to return from school year to school year. Over the past ten years, the new teacher orientation days held in late August have averaged approximately 230 new or re-activated teachers each year. The spirit of the elementary personnel including administration, teaching personnel and staff members is one of unity, enthusiasm and commitment to the mission of Catholic Education. Teachers and administrators readily work side by side participating in all aspects of school life and willingly assist in all initiatives that are for the good of the school and most specifically for increasing levels of success for the students.

The teachers volunteer to lead many committees within the school throughout the year. Some of these committees include: Middle States preparation, curriculum chairpersons, mission moderators, student council moderators, yearbook staff, Catholic Schools Week committee members, liturgy committee members, and a variety of other committees specific to the needs of the individual schools. Teachers are not forced to participate but willingly lend their assistance so that the school is a viable and life-giving setting.

Government-supervised Unionization at the parish or regional school level will seriously affect the continuation of the number of schools currently at the elementary level. I speak from 35 years of deep commitment and insertion in elementary schools as a teacher, an assistant principal and as a principal. Teachers at the elementary level see their greatest need as increased salary for by and large they are well respected, appreciated and dealt with in a very professional manner. The Staff in the Office of Catholic Education over the past ten years has visited the parish and regional schools on a very consistent basis. Ten years ago our style of visitation was one in which we met with each individual lay teacher as well as the religious on staff to see what concerns they had. Nine out of ten lay teachers expressed a desire for increased salary though they understood the progression of events that prevented the increase from being equal to that of their public school counterparts. Increasing salaries beyond what the parish could afford would cause increased tuition beyond what the parents could afford bringing on constriction, closure or possible regionalization. Regardless of the configuration outcome, significantly higher salaries will cause parents to be limited in their choice of Catholic education if tuition levels were to jump to a much higher level.

Currently, the parents and guardians of our students at the elementary level pay approximately 65% of the full per pupil cost for tuition. The largest expense area in the budget of a parish or regional school is salary and benefits which comprises 80% of the total costs. It would be the greatest desire of our parish and regional schools to pay our elementary teachers comparable salaries to their public school counterparts but to do this would severely impact the number of schools, the number of students whose families could afford the tuition and the future of Catholic education as it exists today in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

One of our most important commitments is to make a Catholic education available to as many Catholic children as possible. It is in the Catholic School setting that we are best able to equip these children morally, spiritually and educationally for adult Christian life in a world that increasingly devalues spiritual formation and a spirit-directed life. Government should not be a catalyst for the demise of these schools.

In the fall of each school year, the Pastor's Committee composed of pastor representatives from across the Archdiocese meets to discuss the recommended salary scale for the succeeding school year. Having been at these meetings with the pastors, I can tell you their greatest concern is to be fair and just when arriving at the percentage rate that will be recommended to the pastors with schools for the following school year. Again, the concerns when arriving at the salary increase is never a question of respect or appreciation for the work of our elementary classroom teachers. The pastors are well aware of the role they play in providing excellent, quality Catholic education.

As stated in the publication, "Education and Faith, Faith and Life", I conclude with the following statement and will then welcome your questions and comments: Alas full participants in the teaching mission of the school, lay teachers have the right to join together, if they wish, and select their own appropriate representatives. The process of selecting such representatives must be done in a fair and equitable manner, so that the results of the process are mutually acceptable to all concerned: the Church, the local parish community, and the lay teachers themselves. They have the right to determine the

form of representation that will best achieve their aims and goals within the parish school community. However, because of the intimate relationship of the Catholic school teacher's vocation to the teaching mission of the Church, the form or agency chosen by the lay teachers must be supportive of the Church's teaching mission and must give evidence of this support by willingly committing itself through actions that manifest an understanding of the teaching mission and the Magisterium of the Church.

“Professional organizations whose aim is to protect the interest of those who work in the educational field cannot themselves be divorced from the specific mission of the Catholic school (The Catholic School, Sacred Congregation for Catholic education, # 79).”

“Teachers have the responsibility to be constantly aware of and involved with any representative or representative group which they form or choose, in order to insure that the representative or representative group is always accurately reflecting their aims and goals; they are responsible, too, to understand the terms and conditions of any agreement under which their vocation of teaching is exercised. They also have the right to expect Church leaders to respond to their legitimate needs and concerns within the resources available to the particular parish school (Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith, The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, # 71).”

This has been my experience over the past ten years. The Pastors Committee has worked from a mindset of justice as well as understanding the many contributions the teachers make to enable the Church to provide quality, Catholic education in the elementary schools across the Archdiocese. Teacher's voices are heard within these schools and respectfully responded to at every turn. The parishes provide the greatest level of salary and benefits that they can with many pastors employing creative ways to provide other remunerations to teachers throughout the school year.

A government-supervised unionization of our elementary teachers, at this time in our history, would not bring a better work environment for the teachers. It is our goal every year to provide the teachers with a work environment second to none in the type of classroom setting and expected cooperation from both parents and students to enable the work of Catholic education to unfold without interruption and with a level of excellence that is apparent to all. A government-supervised unionization would further challenge the parishes and the parents/guardians' abilities to provide Catholic education in the way we are currently doing. If a major shift would happen at this time and greater demands for increased salaries would come to the parishes, swift closures would ensue with decreased need for the current number of teachers employed throughout the parishes of the Archdiocese.

If our elementary schools are to survive as Christ-centered reflections of our Gospel ministry, their practices and operations should not be subject to interference by governmental labor relations agencies that force them to adopt a secular model of employment relations.

Thank you.