



Catholic High School Admissions Standards and Practices

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Preamble

With over 45 Catholic high schools across three municipal counties, the Department of Catholic Schools has established a set of operating standards for new student admissions. Consideration of student candidates for incoming 9th grade and transfer student admissions to Catholic high schools in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles is among the most important activities for our secondary institutions. To ensure consistency, clarity and confidence among stakeholders, this document outlines the principles, standards, procedures and timeframe.

Market Landscape

The greater Los Angeles region, including Ventura and Santa Barbara counties, has one of the highest concentrations of non-public high schools in the nation. Moreover, we have the largest number of public charter schools and public-school districts have invested billions in taxpayer funds to build and modernize their school campuses over the past 30 years.

In recent years, particularly in a post COVID-19 pandemic period, the state, and particularly our region, has witnessed a decline of PK-12 student enrollment. With this decline, more physical capacity than students, and public-school budgets requiring additional student revenue to maintain financial stability, the pressure on Catholic school enrollment has never been higher. In fact, in addition to Catholic school closures, public charter and district schools are closing due to declining enrollment. The state is forecasting a decline of at least 20% in K-12 enrollment in our region through 2035.

These pressures are also being felt among families. Cost of living, limited affordable housing, wages, cost of higher education and other associated issues are making it more difficult for parents to afford a Catholic education. In fact, many families are requesting assistance and merit-based scholarships for their children regardless of financial need. Families are becoming more aggressive about comparing packages and "shopping" for the best offer. This creates a challenge to each school administration's desire to maintain fairness in the distribution of financial aid.

The dynamic is creating great pressure on schools, introduced integrity issues, complicated relationships between schools, and has the potential to project a poor moral example. Some schools may be walking a fine line between merit scholarships and "athletic scholarships" either in fact or in interpretation by parents. In some cases, schools are making counter offers of financial aid after the admissions deadline date and registration contracts are submitted. This activity is intensifying competition woes.

Ethical and Professional Standards

The following ethical and professional standards and admissions timeline apply to all archdiocesan and parish high schools in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. High schools conducted independently (i.e. private schools) are encouraged to abide by this statement to maintain good relations with the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, the Department of Catholic Schools, the Catholic Athletic Association (CAA), archdiocesan donors and philanthropic entities (i.e. CEF), WCEA/WASC and to maintain access to Catholic elementary schools and other archdiocesan ministries and assets.

- (a) We are committed to providing a Catholic education to as many families as possible while maintaining appropriate protocols.
- (b) As Catholic schools it is important to keep the lines of communication open to serve as a model for right action with our families and not compromise our integrity.
- (c) Principals will ensure that no one on their faculty and staff is involved in interfering or undermining other Catholic high schools in their recruitment activities.
- (d) In a spirit of collaboration with other Catholic high schools and in consideration of the parents of eighth graders, Catholic high schools **cannot require testing** at the school site for an applicant to be considered for admissions acceptance or financial aid, except for **academic merit scholarships**.
- (e) Catholic high schools will forward full placement exam scores to all other schools requested by the parent **within five to ten days after receipt of the placement exam scores**.
- (f) A Catholic high school may not recruit (especially through larger tuition assistance offer) a student whose parent has paid registration at another high school or a student who is already enrolled in and attending another high school. Parents may change their minds regarding the school they select. Some high schools have waiting lists. Principals and/or the designated school official should be aware of this and investigate appropriately.
- (g) Students and parents seeking to transfer will be evaluated carefully by the receiving

school regarding their reasons for transferring. **The receiving school has the responsibility to contact the sending school before accepting the student.** As part of the communication, the receiving school shall inquire whether the student has an outstanding financial obligation. The sending school will share this information and will be used to properly evaluate the matter and assist the sending school if possible.

- (h) An archdiocesan or parish high school (unless a Cristo Rey school) may not offer tuition assistance at more than 80% of the school's tuition rate. (This includes CEF awards.) Exceptions for economic reasons only must be approved by the regional superintendent (for archdiocesan schools) or the pastor (for parish schools).
- (i) Archdiocesan and parish high schools **will provide at least 30%** of tuition assistance to children of faculty and staff members of any archdiocesan or parish elementary or high school in the archdiocese. Parish and archdiocesan elementary schools are **advised to provide** at least 30% of tuition assistance to children of faculty and staff members of any archdiocesan or parish elementary or high school in the archdiocese.
- (j) Catholic high schools will not admit students who owe money (i.e. tuition, fees, property) to another Catholic school per the archdiocesan administrative handbook's policies (chapter 13.1.3 "High School Admissions Procedures")

II. Admissions Timeline

- (a) The **earliest the high school placement test (HSPT) can be administered** for applicants is **any date in January**. There is no limit as to the number of times a high school may administer the placement exam after this date.
- (b) The earliest date that the parent/student can be notified of the student's official acceptance, tuition assistance/financial aid, scholarships, etc. is the **first Friday of March**. The drop for email and in-person notification will take place **no earlier than 5:00 pm on that Friday**. The drop for U.S. Mail may not be earlier than Wednesday afternoon.
- (c) Schools may begin to collect the registration payment **on the following day (Saturday)** after the official admissions notification has been delivered to the prospective student.
- (d) Catholic high schools may offer **conditional early acceptance** of student candidates for the incoming 9th grade class. If schools elect to offer conditional early acceptance, they must adhere to the following protocols – **no exceptions**:
 - **From December 1st to January 1st**, a Catholic high school may consider

a student who meets certain school-determined criteria (i.e. academic merit, character, service, faith) for conditional early acceptance prior to official admissions.

- Participating schools must continue to follow **ALL** required protocols and procedures for **official admissions** as outlined above.
- **No more than 25%** of the entering 9th grade class can be offered conditional early acceptance.
- Schools **MAY NOT** request teacher and/or principal recommendations when considering conditional early acceptance; recommendations apply only to official admissions. Schools may consider 7th grade academic grades, STAR assessment results, and other academic and meritorious achievements.
- Schools should **interview prospective students and their parent/guardian** as part of the early acceptance process.
- Conditional early acceptance deposits collected by schools **MUST be refundable**. Only registration fees post-official admissions may be non-refundable.
- Financial aid, tuition assistance, academic merit scholarships, CEF scholarships and other scholarships/financial aid **shall NOT be offered or implied in any way** for conditional early acceptance.
- Applicants not conditionally accepted early should be transitioned and considered for traditional admissions.

III. Catholic Elementary Schools

- (a) We are very grateful to our Catholic elementary partner schools for the wonderful work they do in educating young people. We are also grateful for their thoughtful participation in the Catholic high school admissions process.
- (b) A Confidential Common Evaluation Form (<https://handbook.la-archdiocese.org/chapter-13/section-13-1/topic-13-1-3>) is provided by all archdiocesan and parish high schools and most or all private Catholic high schools to assist eighth grade teachers during the high school admissions process.
- (c) All elementary schools that conduct a high school night are urged to do so with at least one or preferably two or more other elementary schools. This does not apply to elementary schools in the Santa Barbara Region or the Antelope Valley where there are fewer schools at greater distances apart from each other.

- (d) All elementary schools that conduct a high school night are urged to use the format of three or four 20-30 minute “periods” where parents and students visit classrooms where presentations by single high schools take place.
- (e) Local public high schools, charter high schools, and non-Catholic religious high schools **should not** be invited to give presentations at Catholic high school nights in Catholic elementary schools. Inviting 7th and 8th grade students from non-Catholic schools to attend a Catholic high school night is encouraged, but non-Catholic high schools should not be given equal footing and free access to our Catholic elementary school students and their families.
- (f) High schools should make every effort to engage area Catholic elementary schools early in the admissions season to discuss their respective schools, partnership opportunities beyond admissions, and build a partnership that is authentic and aligned with Gospel values.
- (g) All local (within the deanery and/or pastoral region) Catholic high schools should be invited to a Catholic high school night. Elementary schools **should not exclude** a Catholic high school or show preference for one over another.

