

Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend

Students

Religious Issues

The teachings and traditions of the Catholic Church are the guiding principles of behavior for all students while enrolled in a diocesan school.

I. Pregnancy – Elementary Student

Every human being is created in the image and likeness of God and his or her life must be respected and protected from the moment of conception until natural death. When a student(s) becomes involved in a pregnancy, the Catholic school must act to provide assistance and support for the student and his or her family.

While the first responsibility for the pastoral, spiritual, and psychological care of the students involved in a pregnancy belongs to the parents/guardians of the students(s), the Church and the school also bear serious responsibility.

When a pastor/principal is made aware that a student(s) is involved in a pregnancy, the following action shall be taken:

- A. The pastor and principal should meet with both parties, the male and female, and their parents/guardians to investigate the situation and to assure them, if necessary, that the young people involved will be provided with the opportunity to complete his/her education in the Catholic school without interruption.
- B. Both parties, the male and female, should then be referred for pastoral counseling given by a priest and a social worker or psychological counselor. This counseling must emphasize the teaching of the Catholic Church on the sanctity of human life from the first moment of conception.
- C. The pastor and principal must seek to assist the young people to ensure that the child is born, not aborted.
- D. The school's administration, after consultation with the school's pastor/designated priest, will decide whether any sanctions are to be imposed on the students. Because of the public nature of the situation and the Catholic identity of the school, the principal, in consultation with the pastor, reserves the right to undertake whatever additional action(s) seem appropriate for the well-being of the student(s) involved and the school as a whole.

II. Pregnancy - High School Student

Every human being is created in the image and likeness of God and his or her life must be respected and protected from the moment of conception until natural death. When a student(s) becomes involved in a pregnancy, the Catholic school must act to provide assistance and support for the student and his or her family.

If it has been discovered that a student enrolled in a diocesan high school is pregnant or is the putative father of an unborn or already-born child, the principal will conduct initial, confidential meeting(s) inviting:

- A. the student(s) involved
- B. the parents/guardians of the student(s)
- C. a priest(s) assigned to the high school

The purpose of the meeting is to investigate and, if necessary, to assure the parties involved that the student(s) will be provided the opportunity to complete his/her education in the Catholic school without interruption and also to emphasize the Church's teaching on the sanctity of human life.

In order to continue his/her education at a diocesan high school, a pregnant student and/or a putative father and the respective parents/guardians must agree to:

- A. secure continued professional prenatal/childrearing care and/or adoption alternatives and
- B. receive pastoral and psychological counseling to assist in coping with the circumstances and to be helped to make the right decisions in keeping with Church teachings. (The schools pastor/designated priest must approve all such professional assistance.)

The school's administration, after consultation with the school's pastor/designated priest, will decide whether any sanctions are to be imposed on the students. Because of the public nature of the situation and the Catholic identity of the school, the principal, in consultation with the priest(s) assigned to the high school, reserves the right to undertake whatever additional action(s) seem appropriate for the well-being of the student(s) involved and the school as a whole.

III. Abortion

Every human being is created in the image and likeness of God, and his or her life must be respected and protected from the moment of conception until natural death. The Church views abortion as a grave violation of this principle and as a most serious sin; Catholic schools must convey the seriousness of this act by its inclusion of this issue in its teaching at appropriate grade levels and of its policies.

Therefore a student enrolled in a diocesan school who obtains a completed and verified abortion or who aids or induces another person in any manner whatsoever in procuring such an abortion shall be suspended immediately and may be denied the privilege of continuing his or her education in a diocesan school, as determined by the Bishop.

A confidential meeting shall be held with the student(s) and parent(s) involved, the pastor, the school principal, and a person(s) designated by the Bishop. The purpose of this meeting will be to ascertain the fact relevant to the commission of the abortion, to provide appropriate pastoral assistance, and to make a recommendation to the Bishop regarding the student's suspension or expulsion.

IV. Marriage

The school administration will defer the decision regarding the disposition and continued enrollment of any student entered into marriage to the Vicar of Education or a delegate of the Bishop.