



Bringing Our Children Into Communion With Christ

# **Saint Elizabeth Parish**

# **EFF PROGRAM HANDBOOK**

## **Forming Intentional Disciples in Jesus Christ**

“The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ” (Catechesi Tradendae #5).

This handbook contains certain policies and procedures for the Saint Elizabeth Parish Elementary Faith Formation Program (herein: *EFF Program* or simply: *EFF*). The program may change any of its policies and procedure as needed and apply them as circumstances dictate.

In the event of such a change, parents will be given prompt notification and will be provided with an addendum, as needed. If you have any questions about a particular policy or procedure, please contact the Coordinator of Religious Education (610-646-6545).

Students and parents must accept and abide by the policies and procedures contained in this handbook for the student to attend and participate in the *EFF Program*.

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# MISSION STATEMENT & PROGRAM GOALS

## MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission of the Saint Elizabeth Parish Elementary Faith Formation Program (EFF) is to provide children an education in the Catholic faith through catechetical instruction. We encourage full participation in a holy, faithful and vibrant Catholic community rooted in the Word of God and the Sacraments. EFF strives to help children encounter God and to build a living relationship with Jesus Christ and His Church.

## PROGRAM GOALS

The Saint Elizabeth EFF Program supports the parish Mission Statement by helping form the faith lives of our children in kindergarten through seventh grade and provides special sacramental and catch-up tutorial classes as needed. Our goals are to:

- Inflame in the children a desire to learn, know and understand their relationship with Christ through our Catholic faith and to apply Christ's teaching to their daily lives.
- Prepare the children to receive the sacraments regularly as an expression of a living, vibrant faith and to enhance the worship experience of children at Mass and other services.
- Help the children to recognize, develop, and use their God given gifts in stewardship service to others.
- Encourage the children to engage in faith discussions with their parents or guardians.
- Help parents to understand their unique role in the formation of their child's faith life.

The Saint Elizabeth EFF program is available to all registered members of the parish in kindergarten through seventh grade. On an as-needed basis, special classes are offered for older children who have not received any or all the Sacraments of Initiation – Baptism, Confirmation or Holy Communion. We are happy to work with students and families to develop a path to these sacraments.

## POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

### ATTENDANCE

*Archdiocesan guidelines* for elementary school children specify a minimum of thirty (30) sessions of formal religious education each year. Parents are expected to have their children attend all the weekly classes delineated in the annual EFF calendar. Consistent attendance is a sign of parents' commitment to have their children continue to grow in their understanding and their active practice of the Catholic Faith.

EFF sessions are normally offered on Mondays and Tuesdays from Mid-September through Mid-May except for on major holidays and major parish events.

### STUDENT ABSENCE:

When an absence is necessary, parents are expected to contact the catechist and the EFF Office in advance to report that their child will not be in class. Students are responsible for missed lessons. Work at home may be assigned to cover the material. The completion of these lessons will be tracked by the catechist.

In accordance with Archdiocesan absentee policy, when students are absent from 3 or more classes during the program year, the D/CRE may contact their parent(s) to develop a plan to ensure promotion at the end of the program year. This plan may include additional assessments or assignments.

Students, particularly those in sacramental preparation years, who incur 6 absences must meet with their parent(s) and the D/CRE. They may be required to a) finish the school year via sufficient home-based catechesis with parents, or b) re-enroll in the following year's program to repeat the current grade.

### EXTENDED ABSENCES DUE TO ILLNESS

An extended absence due to illness is defined as an absence that spans two or more consecutive weeks. Parents should be in regular contact with the D/CRE during an extended absence so that, if the student's condition allows, missed assignments and class work are completed during the extended absence. Every effort should be made to continue the student's formation and keep his/her instruction and assignments up to date.

### STUDENT TARDINESS / EARLY DISMISSAL

Late arrivals or early dismissals are strongly discouraged. Missing more than 20 minutes of a class will be considered an absence.

If a student arrives after the carline, the parent must park and walk the student to the door, ring the bell and sign the student in. No student should be dropped off if a carline volunteer is not present at the curb.

If an early dismissal is necessary, please inform the office before class so the catechist will be aware that the child will leave early. A parent must come into the building to sign the child out. The child will be called from the classroom to meet the parent in the vestibule.

## ARRIVAL PROCEDURES

Please note, for an efficient start to each session, parents should use the carline to drop their children at arrival. Parents should not park and enter the building. Some exceptions to this policy will be made for the first 3 weeks of class for the parents of young children who have difficulty separating at the car. These parents will be required to sign in and obtain a visitor's pass to walk their children to the classroom during these weeks. The goal is to assist them in learning the location of the classroom so the family can use the carline for the remainder of the year.

Carline drop-off will begin 15 minutes prior to the start of class and ends promptly at the beginning of class. Drop off times are 4:30-4:45 PM for afternoon classes and 6:15 – 6:30 PM for evening classes. Please seat children in the vehicle so they can easily exit the car curbside for maximum safety in the parking lot.

## DISMISSAL

Only authorized adults are permitted to enter the school building at dismissal time for the safety of our students and staff. Adherence to the dismissal procedures outlined below will help all students to exit the building in a safe, orderly, and timely manner.

**Parent ID cards:** Each family will be issued two laminated Parent ID cards. At the end of each session, parents, guardians, and other authorized adults must show their Parent ID card to enter the building. They may then proceed to their children's classrooms. Catechists will dismiss students to the parent / authorized adult who show their ID card. Children and adults will then depart the building together.

Families that carpool for dismissal must complete the *Carpool Permission Form* indicating who is authorized to pick up the child. The catechists will not dismiss the child to anyone other than his/her parent or guardian without the *Carpool Permission Form*.

## CUSTODY POLICY

EFF Program staff will not become involved in adjudicating the rights of parents in relation to the custody of their children. Therefore, if a parent is separated, divorced, or unmarried, it is the responsibility of both biological parents to provide the D/CRE with the latest, most up-to-date Custodial Order or Custody Agreement. The Program will request these documents at the time of registration. If either Custodial Order or Custody Agreement changes during the course of the year, it remains the responsibility of both biological parents to provide the revised document to the D/CRE immediately. This is also true in the event that such an agreement is issued after the time of enrollment. In the absence of such documentation, the EFF staff will and must assume that parents share legal custody.

The EFF Program abides by the provisions of the Buckley Amendment with respect to the rights of non-custodial parents. In the absence of a court order to the contrary, the EFF staff will provide the non-custodial parent with access to the records and other program related information regarding the child. If there is a court order specifying that there is to be no information given, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the D/CRE with an official and the latest copy of the court order. If a court order prohibits our releasing a child into the custody of a non-custodial parent, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide the D/CRE with an official copy of the court order or custody section of the divorce decree.

In situations with shared legal custody, the EFF staff expect the cooperation of both parents, especially in regard to sacramental preparation and celebrations.

## VISITOR POLICY

EFF limits visitors to those with essential business or individuals offering necessary classroom support. All visitors must state their reason for visiting, they must sign-in and sign-out and wear a badge visibly while in the education center building. If visitors will interact with children, they must be accompanied by an adult with complete safe environment clearances.

## ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Students are permitted to bring a cell phone to EFF class. However, the cell phone may not be used during the class unless at the catechists' direction. Catechists may require students to store cell phones in a common bin or other receptacle during class to ensure compliance.

## ENROLLMENT

Families will enroll their children each year via an online registration form. Upon initial enrollment, families must provide a copy of each child's Baptismal Certificate if the baptism was not performed at Saint Elizabeth Church.

Students are expected to enroll in the program no later than first grade and complete the program in seventh grade. Kindergarten participation is encouraged, but optional. Typically, following this enrollment schedule, students receive the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist during their second-

grade year and their Confirmation in seventh grade. Missing a year of catechesis may defer the receipt of a sacrament until the proper amount of formation is complete

## PROGRAM FEES

Program fees are a necessary part of the EFF Program and help ensure that the staff can provide students and their families with the most current and best catechetical resources for their formation needs.

The EFF Program fee is due in full at the time of registration. However, being sensitive to the needs of our families, a deferred payment plan may be available upon request. Anyone who cannot pay the fee in full at the time of registration or who has difficulty making payment due to hardship should fill out the Tuition Assistance Form available online or from the D/CRE. This form will be processed by the Parish Business Manager.

If a student voluntarily leaves the Program during the program year or is dismissed from the Program for any reason including, but not limited to, poor attendance or a disciplinary incident no refund of tuition will be made to the family.

## FOOD PROTOCOL

Given the many EFF students with food allergies and the sharing of the classroom space with children in the parish school, the EFF Program prohibits eating in the classrooms. Students requiring an exception to this policy for medical reasons should submit a written request to the D/CRE explaining their situation.

## WEATHER CLOSURES & EMERGENCY CANCELLATIONS

All program updates related to weather closures will be sent via *Flocknote*. Announcements will also be posted on the St. Elizabeth Parish website [www.stelizabethparish.org](http://www.stelizabethparish.org).

In most cases, if Saint Elizabeth Parish School and/ or Downingtown School District are closed for bad weather, Elementary Faith Formation classes will also be cancelled for that day. If the weather clears significantly, EFF classes may be held. Updated notifications will be posted on the parish website.

## SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM

### CLEARANCES / TRAINING REQUIRED FOR ALL ADULTS

All adults volunteering or working within the EFF program must meet all Saint Elizabeth Safe Environment Requirements. This includes a current PA State Criminal Background Check, PA Child Abuse History Clearance and a Federal Fingerprint Background Check (PA residents who have resided in the state for over 10 years can complete a disclosure form in lieu of fingerprinting). Volunteers must also complete the two Archdiocese Safe Environment Training Courses, *Protecting God's Children* and *Mandated Reporter of Suspected Child Abuse*.

## KID TALK LESSONS FOR CHILDREN

Each child enrolled in EFF will receive the age-appropriate safe environment lesson, KID TALK, provided by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Parents will be notified of the lesson schedule in advance and will be afforded the opportunity to opt-out of the in-class presentation of the lesson to their child(ren). The lesson materials are available online at the Office of Child and Youth Protection, Archdiocese of

Philadelphia. Select 'Education and Training' under the 'Protect Children' tab. The direct link to the lessons is: <https://childyouthprotection.org/index.php/protect-children/trainings/kidtalk-overview>

## FORMATION & ACADEMIC LIFE

### ASSESSMENTS

Assessments are administered at the discretion of the catechists, and may be formal (such as a quiz or a chapter/unit review) or informal (such as a classroom debate, review games, class/group discussion, etc.) In the event of a formal assessment, catechists will provide a minimum of one week's advanced notice to students. Assessments are used to monitor student learning in order to provide ongoing feedback to catechists and students in order to improve learning. In addition, mid-year and final reviews are administered in each grade.

### CLASS PARTICIPATION / PREPARATION

Students must come to class ready to participate in the planned activities. No lesson or activity will prove worthwhile if students do not participate in them. Participation also means that students come to class prepared for class. Students must ensure that they have the proper materials for class including, but not limited to, their textbook and a writing implement.

**Preparation for class:** To ensure that students are ready for each session, please consider the following:

- **Clothing and attire:** should be age appropriate for a school or church setting.
- **Food and gum:** neither are permitted in the building.
- **Snacks:** please be sure your child has had a snack or meal before coming to class.
- **Restroom:** classes are relatively short, please have your child use the restroom prior to class to reduce the number of classroom interruptions.

### CURRICULUM

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia provides the scope and sequence and religion guidelines for each level of religious education. This information is available on the Archdiocese Office of Catechetical Formation website, <http://www.phillyocf.org/scope-sequence-charts/> and <https://phillyocf.org/religion-guidelines/>. The textbooks and related materials used by our catechists meets the criteria set forth by these documents. The catechists may present the lesson content in a different sequence than it appears in the text or on the scope and sequence chart.

### DISCIPLINE

**APPROPRIATE CONDUCT:** Being faithful to our Catholic tradition, we promote acceptance and practice of the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes as laws for living. We strive to guide each child in a positive manner, affirming the good that is done to encourage positive behavior.

Examples of inappropriate conduct:

- Being disrespectful to anyone
- Name calling or using obscene language or gestures
- Hitting or physically hurting anyone / harassment
- Bringing any dangerous item into the school

- Inappropriate use of electronics during class
- Stealing or damaging property

Should a child decide to misbehave, consequences are determined on an individual basis. The final determination of what constitutes inappropriate behavior is made by the D/CRE. Therefore, the D/CRE will determine which behaviors warrant formal disciplinary action. The disposition of any disciplinary issue will be conducted in consultation with child's parents.

The behavior of parents and guardians attending EFF events is also expected to be consistent with Catholic teaching.

It is our hope that each student will come to accept rules and regulations as a necessary part of our society and understand EFF rules are in place to promote the general wellbeing of all.

## HOMWORK

Catechists may assign homework to reinforce the day's lessons. This work should be reviewed by parents for quality and completeness. Homework may consist of worksheets, completing assignments in the textbook, study and memorization, projects, web activities, or any other means deemed appropriate by the catechist to reinforce and review the material presented during class.

All Confirmation Preparation students (7<sup>th</sup> grade classes) will complete a *Saint Project* under the direction of their catechists.

## COMMUNICATION INFORMATION & UPDATES

*Flocknote* will be the primary means of communication for the EFF Program. Parents will receive periodic emails with updates and important information from the EFF Flocknote account. The contact information that you provide at the time of registration will be used as the primary means of contacting you. To receive necessary information pertaining to your child's participation in the EFF Program, it is imperative that you notify the D/CRE as to any changes in address, phone numbers, or email.

## CALENDARS

The EFF Program calendar indicating regular class days, prayer services and all special events is provided on the EFF webpage of the parish website. Calendars highlighting the important dates related to First Reconciliation, First Holy Communion and Confirmation are provided to parents at the Sacramental Preparation meetings. Any changes to the calendar will be conveyed to parents by the D/CRE.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

**Religious Education Office: 610-646-6545**

**Fax Number: 610-646-6541**

**E-mail: [religioused@stelizabethparish.org](mailto:religioused@stelizabethparish.org)**

**Website: <https://stelizabethparish.org/index.php/contact-us/elementary-faith-formation-2>**

### **Additional Numbers to Know:**

**Parish Ministry Center: 610-321-1200 Fax Number: 610-646-6513**