



ARCHDIOCESE OF MIAMI

Office of Catholic Schools

PARENT/STUDENT HANDBOOK DRAFTING GUIDELINES

The list below is meant to assist principals in developing local policies for their Parent/Student Handbook. This list should not be shared with individuals outside of each school's designated administrative team.

1. Remove all mandatory obligations on the part of the school. While the handbook can certainly impose obligations and standards on the parents and students of the school, the handbook should not impose any obligations on the school. In contrast, all of the policies should be drafted to provide the school with the discretion to take whatever actions it deems necessary given the circumstances. Therefore, remove all mandatory language (such as "shall" or "will") and instead use discretionary language (such as "may") when referring to actions of the school or its administration.
2. Do not state in the handbook that the school has any duty to the students or parents. This may suggest that the school has a legal obligation which is inappropriate for the Parent-Student Handbook.
3. Do not identify a particular form of discipline for specific conduct violations. It is important to leave all forms of discipline to the discretion of the principal depending on the circumstances of the particular incident.
4. Remove any statements that the school is owned and operated by the Archdiocese of Miami.
5. The handbook does not have to address all conceivable situations. Schools often face changing environments so it is important that the handbook allow for flexibility.
6. Make sure your policies are consistent. Very often, the policies in a handbook are developed over time. It is important to ensure the handbook is cohesive, both in substance and style.
7. Make sure each student and/or parent returns the signature page and all necessary releases. These releases and signature pages should be kept for a minimum of five (5) years.

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