



The Episcopal Diocese of Texas

Commission on Schools Handbook

2023-2024
(January 25, 2024)

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Episcopal Schools

It has been said that Episcopal schools continue on Mondays what the worship and fellowship of the Episcopal Church offers on Sundays. Whether those schools are preschools or high schools, they accept the challenge of blending real life with a rich academic setting in a welcoming, faith-filled environment. The educators in Episcopal schools structure their schools to encourage learning, celebrate exploration, welcome inquiry, and address the hard questions of their young students. These schools are friendly, serious, happy, exciting, and stimulating learning centers. Children and young people find common ground in the business of learning, presented with a unique balance of faith and reason, debate and discussion, respectful disagreement and enthusiastic discovery.

Episcopal schools are complex institutions that promote academic excellence, recognize each learner's potential, expect personal accountability, and instill courage for new and lifelong learning. These schools seek parental understanding of both the work ethic and instructional creativity employed by dedicated teaching professionals who bring expertise, varied life experiences, and their own diversity to their positions. The staff appreciates the inclusivity of Episcopal schools and the historical commitment of the Church to excellence in education, and is passionately committed to the highest quality of educational programming available.

The common connections between these Episcopal schools include 4 key areas:

A school ministry that includes age-appropriate chapel services, an unapologetic religion curriculum that is respectful of the many faiths of the students, service-learning experiences, and pastoral care.

An inclusive community that celebrates its cultural pluralism, works intentionally to welcome children from diverse and economically varied family situations, teaches civility and social justice, and rejects marginalization and bullying.

A governance system that includes an Episcopal presence on the school's board and a partnership with its parish or diocese.

A mission statement that guides decisions and applauds a strong commitment to educational excellence.

Episcopal schools in the Diocese of Texas are a thriving collection of **54** highly respected schools, working with approximately **12,442** students at the beginning of the 2023-2024 academic year. This is an important, successful ministry that deserves our ongoing support.

Prayer for Schools:

O Eternal God, bless all schools, colleges, and universities that they may be lively centers for sound learning, new discovery, and the pursuit of wisdom; and grant that those who teach and those who learn may find you to be the source of all truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

School Structure

The vision of a parish or a founding board defines the scope of its Episcopal school, whether a small start-up preschool, a large college-prep high school, or a multi-grade school with extensive academic departments and hundreds of students. Within the Diocese of Texas there are parish schools, diocesan schools, independent schools, and non-traditional schools. Below is a general description of the different programs:

Early Preschool: Enrolls infants, 1-year-olds and/or 2-year-olds

Preschool: Enrolls 2-year-olds through kindergarten; may include Early Preschool

Primary, Intermediate, Secondary: Enrolls elementary, middle school, and/or High School; may include Preschool and Early Preschool

Parish school: Controlled by a sponsoring parish or mission

Diocesan school: Controlled by the Diocese or group of parishes

Independent school: With Bishop's permission, organized without control by a parish, mission, or other ecclesiastical authority

Non-traditional school: Located on the property of an Episcopal parish, with a therapeutic or diagnostic educational program

Boarding school: Located on property separate from an Episcopal parish with facilities for residential living

School Governance

All Episcopal schools share common characteristics in their bylaws which distinguish them from other private or independent schools. First, they affirm that they practice the faith and worship of the Episcopal Church and will operate with the knowledge and written consent of the Bishop of the Diocese of Texas. Second, they acknowledge that they abide by the Canons of the Episcopal Church and the Diocese, and they will meet the Standards set forth by the Commission on Schools. Third, they operate as a Texas non-profit corporation with a governing board that is comprised of at least 60% Episcopalians.

Episcopal Boards of Trustees meet regularly and focus on policy approval, financial oversight, development of resources and strategic planning for the future, and support of their single employee, the Head of School (or Director). Episcopal boards frequently design their fiscal year to match the school academic year to better monitor budgetary changes. Parish day schools must coordinate decision-making carefully with their church vestry for these two institutions to collaborate successfully.

Independent Episcopal schools are located separate from a parish facility, and they live their Episcopal identity in unique ways. Everything from partnering with local parishes to recruiting supportive board members and seeking counsel from local rectors may strengthen the school's Church connection. In some cases, the Bishop may allow and/or require priests to sit on an independent school's board.

Diocese of Texas, Canon on Schools, Audits, & Incorporation

The Canons of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas are the set of rules by which the Diocese is governed. The Canon on Schools, shown below, requires that a parish must have approval of the Bishop to operate a school. In order to receive that approval, schools must meet the published Standards endorsed by the Bishop-appointed Commission on Schools. The Commission will then certify to the Bishop that a school is in compliance with the required Standards and seek the Bishop's approval for the continuance of the school. The complete list of Canons can be found on the Diocesan website at: <https://www.epicenter.org/constitution--canons/>.

•Title 111.11, Canon 11

Section 11.1 Relationship to the Diocese

All schools or other educational facilities providing secular education for young people equivalent to that provided by nursery schools or on the kindergarten, grade school, grammar school, or high school level, and located on any premises used for the benefit of or operated under the control, auspices, or approval of any Parish, Mission, organization, or institution of the Diocese, or any combination or group thereof, shall be an Episcopal School of the Diocese, and no such school shall be established, maintained, or operated without the written approval and consent of the Bishop of the Diocese of Texas. The Principal, Headmaster, or Headmistress of an Episcopal School of the Diocese shall be a confirmed communicant in good standing of a Parish or Mission of the Diocese. The Bishop may make exception of the requirement set forth in the preceding sentence, within such limitations and conditions as the Bishop may prescribe. The Rector (or if the office of Rector is vacant, the Senior Warden) or Priest-in-Charge or Missionary of the sponsoring Parish or Mission (for the purpose of this sentence, the "Rector") shall be a member ex-officio and Chair of the governing board of the school; provided that, in the absence of or at the pleasure of the Rector, a designee of the Rector may serve from time to time as Chair.

Section 11.2 Standards of Compliance

a. The Bishop shall establish a Diocesan Commission on Schools consisting of no less than 5 nor more than 12 communicants in good standing in the Diocese. It shall be the duty of the Commission to publish (subject to the Bishop's approval) standards for Episcopal Schools in this diocese, give general supervision to all such schools, and perform such other functions regarding such schools as the Bishop may require. All schools shall comply with such Standards as well as the other provisions of the Canon.

b. Each school shall comply with licensing, health, safety, fire, and sanitation standards required at any time by state, county, and municipal health, safety, fire, and sanitation codes for the locality in which such school is located.

Section 11.3 Failure of Compliance

Any such school that fails to comply with the provisions of this Canon shall not be entitled to be located on any property that is used for the benefit of any Parish, Mission, institution, or organization of the Diocese of Texas, and neither shall it be entitled to be operated under the control, auspices, or approval of any such Parish, Mission, institution, or organization of the Diocese of Texas.

Section 11.4 Reports and Inspections

The Bishop shall have the right at any time, and from time to time, to require and obtain such information and reports as may be deemed necessary by the Bishop to ensure compliance with this Canon, and the Bishop shall likewise have the right at any time, and from time to time, to inspect or cause to be inspected, each such school in order to monitor compliance with the provisions of this Canon. The Bishop shall have the right at any time to appoint one or more representatives to assist the Bishop in ensuring compliance with the Canon.

•Title 1.4, Canon 4 Section 4.5 Audits

The accounts of all parishes, missions, and other church institutions and organizations in the Diocese relating to the receipts and expenditures or investments of money shall be audited annually at the end of each calendar year by an independent Certified Public Accountant, independent Licensed Public Accountant, or such audit committee as shall be authorized by the Executive Board [of the Diocese]. The reports of all such audits, including any memoranda issued by the auditing authority regarding internal controls or other accounting matters, shall be filed with the Bishop not later than thirty days following the date of such reports but in any event prior to Sept. 1 of each year covering the financial reports of the previous calendar year.

[Please note: The Executive Board of the Diocese currently allows institutions with annual operating income less than \$750,000 to conduct an internal financial review using published Diocesan guidelines in lieu of an external audit. (In order to assist

duly-appointed internal financial review committees in this volunteer work, the Commission on Schools has developed and offers without warranty a set of procedures specific to schools. School board chairs may obtain a copy of these new procedures from the Chair of the Commission.) Our accredited schools must comply with the rules of their accrediting association(s) which may require an external audit or review regardless of annual income. Schools typically have a fiscal year aligned with the academic cycle and, thus, ending in a summer month. For schools, the audit or review should be performed at the close of the school's fiscal year and submitted by Dec. 31 to the Diocesan Treasurer's office.]

•Title 111.1.6-1.8, Canon 9 Section 9.6 Incorporation

Any Diocesan entity, as defined herein, may incorporate or exist in any corporate form upon and subject to the terms and conditions of the Constitution and Canons. For the purpose of this Canon, the terms shall have the meanings set forth below: The term "Diocesan entity" shall mean the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Texas, any Parish or Mission of the Diocese, any Episcopal school of the Diocese, as defined in the Canons, and any other Constitution and Canons as an instrumentality, or entity of the Diocese...(continues)

The Commission on Schools

In 1978 the Canon on Schools was approved by this Diocese. The Rev. A. Dean Calcote was appointed chairman of the Commission on Schools and worked with bishops, priests, and heads of school over the years until 2013, helping define the expectations of exemplary schools in the Episcopal Diocese of Texas. The work of the Commission has encouraged a new focus on the growing ministries of the many schools in this region.

Parishes and schools are encouraged to communicate with the Commission when seeking general resources, clarification of Standards, or information about opening a new school. Additionally, the Commission and Diocese must be informed of any event which causes a substantial challenge to the operations of the school, such as a major financial or legal complication that could impact the school, parish, and/or Diocese, or is a violation of the Safeguarding program guidelines.

EDOT Commission on Schools: (rev. 8/3/2022)

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The Annual Report & Episcopal Identity Addendum

The Commission on Schools contacts each school in early fall with an Annual Report form to be completed in a timely manner and returned to the Commission. This information is then collated and returned to the schools as well as reported to the Diocese. The information requested may include enrollment data, personnel distribution, tuition information, and general budgetary information. Schools may be required to affirm their compliance with the published Standards, such as accreditation status. Schools will also be encouraged to provide optional information on special projects, service learning, or successful joint ventures with parishes. Schools not accredited by SAES may also be asked to complete an additional form regarding Episcopal Identity.

The Standards for Schools

All Episcopal schools in the Diocese of Texas must abide by the Canons of the Episcopal Church and the Diocese of Texas and shall meet the following Standards set forth by the Diocesan Commission on Schools. These Standards may be amended or supplemented from time to time by the Commission.

Certification is determined by the Annual Report unless a further review is indicated. This review shall include a check of items on file for the school, including annual reports, organizational documents, and verification of accreditation status. In the case of schools not accredited by SAES a review may require the completion of the Commission's Addendum on Episcopal Identity. Non-accredited schools eligible (due to size) for Basic Certification **may** be visited by a representative of the Commission on Schools. On the basis of accreditation status, documentation submitted by the school, and the report from a representative of the Commission on Schools (if required), the Commission shall certify for the Bishop whether or not the school is in compliance with Diocesan Standards.

*Major Standards are noted with an asterisk.

General Standards:

*1. The school shall be affiliated with the Episcopal Church as a parish day school, a school administered by the Diocese or a group of parishes, or a school that practices the faith and worship of the Episcopal Church and operates with the knowledge and written consent of the Bishop of the Diocese of Texas. For a school beginning operations for the first time, it must be affiliated with the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Texas and shall provide a written plan indicating how it will meet the Standards set forth by the Diocesan Schools Commission.

*2. The school shall operate in compliance with the Canons of the Episcopal Church, specifically Title 111, Canon 11 (schools), Title 1.4, Canon 4 Audit The school must have an annual audit by an independent CPA (**but an internal financial review may be allowed for schools with an annual operating income less than**

\$750,000), and Title 111.1.6-1.8, Canon 9 (incorporation: the school shall be incorporated as a Texas non-profit corporation with Certificate of Formation and Bylaws approved by the Diocese.) Schools shall submit their audit or modified organizational documents to the Treasurer's office for approval.

*3. The school shall be in compliance with Safeguarding God's Children and Safeguarding God's People program requirements and record-keeping for staff and volunteers as well as obtain required background checks. Individual certification and background checks must be renewed every five years.

4. The school shall submit to the Commission on Schools a written "records discontinuance plan" which outlines the procedures for placement and storage of certain types of records, including student records and faculty service records, if the school closes or ceases to exist. [Note: The Commission has developed guidelines for this policy which have been provided to heads of school and directors.]

Program Standards:

(Note: Early Preschools do not usually include an extensive pre-academic or religious program but are expected to implement the current best educational practices in an appropriately stimulating, safe, and nurturing environment.)

1. The school shall have a developmental or challenging academic program set in a Christian environment that meets the diverse needs of its students academically, socially, and spiritually.

*2. The school shall include regular services of worship, designed as age appropriate, which follow the Book of Common Prayer or are approved by the appropriate ecclesiastical authority of the Episcopal Church, in accordance with the Doctrine, Discipline, and Worship of the Episcopal Church.

*3. The school shall include a religion component in its curriculum, designed with age-appropriate lessons, more academically engaging for older students, which respectfully acknowledges faith differences among students, and encourages service learning or outreach activities.

*4. The school shall publish a non-discrimination admission policy that does not exclude students because of race, color, nationality, ethnic origin, family situation, or economic limitations insofar as possible, and the school shall make every effort to provide financial aid. The school shall file an IRS Form 5578 annually (Annual Certification of Racial Nondiscrimination for a Private School Exempt from Federal Income Tax).

5. The school shall have faculty qualified by college degrees and other training appropriate to their assignment and who hold a personal faith commitment consistent with and supportive of the spiritual mission and program of the school.

*6. The school shall be an accredited school affiliated with a recognized educational accrediting agency. The following are recommended agencies:

Southwestern Association of Episcopal Schools (SAES); www.swaes.org

Independent School Association of the Southwest (ISAS); www.isasw.org

National Assoc. for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC); www.naeyc.org

American Montessori Society (AMS); www.amshq.org

National Accreditation Commission (NAC); www.earlylearningleaders.org

[Both SAES and ISAS are accrediting agencies recognized by the Commissioner of Education for the State of Texas through TEPSAC and the National Association of Independent Schools. Schools that are not accredited by SAES will be required to complete, when requested, the Commission addendum called, Episcopal Identity.]

[Schools with an enrollment of less than 50 students are exempt from the requirement of accreditation but must be in compliance with all other Standards and complete, when requested, the Commission addendum entitled, Episcopal Identity. If enrollment grows beyond the minimum of 50 students, in the second year of greater enrollment, the school shall begin the accreditation process.]

Administrative and Governance Standards:

*1. The school shall have a clearly stated mission and set of objectives adopted by the school's Board of Trustees and, in the case of a parish day school, approved by the Rector and Vestry, and communicated through school literature, handbooks, and other media.

*2. The Board of Trustees shall consist of no less than 60% Episcopalians. In a parish day school good faith effort should be made to recruit members of the parish to the board.

3. In a parish school, the Rector shall be the chairman of the school's Board of Trustees.

4. The Head of School shall be a communicant member of the Episcopal Church or shall apply for an exemption from the Bishop of the Diocese. A form for requesting this exemption is available from the Commission.

*5. The school shall meet all national, state, and local health and safety requirements with confirmation of such compliance on file. The school shall meet the requirements of the Texas Department of Health and Human Services concerning child care licensing, if applicable. The school shall also **adopt** policies to address both security and emergency procedures appropriate to the campus.

*6. The school shall adopt an annual budget with anticipated revenue and expenses. The budget should include adequate insurance (general liability, Directors and Officers liability, sexual misconduct coverage, and other insurance as necessary), and

in parish day schools, evidence of a Memorandum of Understanding between the church and school addressing shared expenses and shared spaces shall be in place.

7. The school shall provide adequate compensation and benefits for personnel, including professional development funds and funding for benefits prescribed by the Diocese. There shall also be instruments of evaluation for all employees.

8. The school shall provide counseling and pastoral care when needed.

9. In a parish day school the Head of School and Rector shall establish a mutually supportive relationship and uphold each other's respective ministries in the church and school communities.

10. In an independent Episcopal school, the Board shall designate a permanent Committee on Episcopal Identity, and if the Head of School is not an Episcopal priest, the Head of School shall hire a chaplain for the school.

*11. The school shall complete and submit the Annual Report from the Commission on Schools and, if requested, the Episcopal Identity Addendum to the Chair of the Commission.

Accreditation of Episcopal Schools

One of the major requirements of a Fully Certified Episcopal school is accreditation by a recognized educational agency. Currently, there is only one Episcopal agency accrediting Episcopal schools in the U.S., the Southwestern Association of Episcopal Schools. The other agencies listed in the Standards also provide a thorough accreditation process for many of our schools, but an Episcopal Identity form must be completed if requested by the Commission Chair at the time of the Annual Report for those schools.

The only exemption from accreditation is given to our smallest schools with enrollment of less than 50 students. These may be "start-up" schools, schools with limited facilities that are small by circumstances, or schools in transition as they rebuild. While this exemption is available to the smallest schools, they are encouraged to consider participating in accreditation as a resource for encouraging professional growth and school improvement. The smallest schools must comply with all other Standards of the Commission and will be visited according to a schedule developed by the Commission on Schools.

Certification and Approval

A new Episcopal school must apply for Certification from the Commission on Schools within its first year of operation, leading to Approval from the Bishop. The application will verify the school's compliance with the above Canons and Standards and will be followed by a visit from a member of the Commission. An application is available

from the Chairman of the Commission.

Full Certification: A school meets all Standards and is accredited.

Basic Certification (applicable only for small schools with enrollment of <50 students): A school meets all Standards and completes the Episcopal Identity Form annually, but is exempt from the accreditation requirement.

Recognition (applicable only for Non-Traditional schools): A school meets all Standards, including accreditation by an approved agency; may be exempt from religious requirements.

Loss of Certification, Loss of Approval

Under certain circumstances a school may lose its Certification by the Commission on Schools and/or its Approval from the Bishop. The following are situations which could cause this:

1. The school withdraws its affiliation with the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Texas.
2. The school fails to meet any of the major Standards set forth by the Commission.
3. The school fails to show improvement of any other Standard(s) not yet fully met.
4. A school dishonors or defames its presence in the community, and in the Bishop's judgment, may not continue to represent the Episcopal community.

Under certain circumstances, Re-certification by the Commission and Renewed Approval by the Bishop may be possible once correction of a problem has been resolved or a Standard met. A request for consideration of Re-Certification may be made to the Commission.

Policy in the Diocese of Texas Prohibiting Guns on Campus

Effective January, 2016, the State Legislature passed the Texas Open Carry Law which addresses the public, concealed and non-concealed, carrying of many different sorts of guns – everywhere, including churches. Notice is now required that guns are forbidden on church campuses. This information should be included in Parent and Staff Handbooks as well as visible signage at all school entrances. The Bishop of our Diocese has reiterated that “our longstanding policy in the Diocese of Texas remains the same – guns have no place in our churches, schools, and institutions. Other than those carried by officers of the peace or security officers on duty, we adhere to our policy prohibiting guns on church and school property.” Under Texas law our churches and schools have the right to forbid entry to someone carrying a gun; the State defines “schools” as K-12 so those with preschools must be proactive in addressing this. This and other diocesan policies may be found via the following link: <https://www.epicenter.org/resources/policies/gun-law-and-policy-clergy-manual-36/>.

Diocesan Gambling Policy

The Gambling policy, found in the EDOT Clergy Manual (9.1), is as follows:
 "Gambling is defined as participation in any game or activity where money or objects of value may be won by chance. Gambling must not be a regular or frequent part of the activities of any congregation, school, or diocesan institution. Occasional special events or fundraisers that include bingo or a raffle are permissible, provided the value of any prize does not exceed the \$600 IRS reporting threshold. This policy applies to any event or activity of a diocesan institution, congregation, or church-related entity such as a school, youth group, outreach ministry, and the like, regardless of the location of the event or activity. All congregations, diocesan institutions, schools, and church-related entities must comply with this policy if any form of gambling is permitted at all." (Note that diocesan policy is subject to change.)

Diocesan Alcohol Policy:

Schools are encouraged to write local policy reflecting the local situation but consistent with Diocesan Alcohol Policy. See the link referenced above or the following:

www.epicenter.org/safeguarding/policies-and-help-sheets/.

(To find the Alcohol Policy from this page, scroll down and look under the heading "Additional Policies for EDOT Organizations & Events.")

Note: for schools, guideline #11 should set forth the role of the head of school as follows: "In Schools, the groups or organizations sponsoring the activity or event at which alcoholic beverages are served must have permission from the head of school (or from the school board if there is no head of school). In parish day schools, only the head of school (or board designee if there is no head of school), if in agreement, is the person designated to seek permission from the head of congregation on behalf of the school." (Note that diocesan policy is subject to change.)

Group Health Insurance:

The Medical Trust offers an array of group health plans to provide access to high quality and consistent benefits. Episcopal Schools may participate in the health plans offered in the Episcopal Diocese of Texas. School administrators may contact Zee Turnbull (Director of Human Resources) for more information:

ZTurnbull@epicenter.org. For general documents, plan comparisons, monthly premiums, and available healthcare options, please visit www.epicenter.org/benefits.

Building and Property in Parishes and Parish Schools:

The Protestant Episcopal Church Council of the Diocese of Texas ("Church Corporation") holds title to all real estate property in the Diocese of Texas. Prior approval from the Church Corporation must be obtained regarding all proposed property transactions including building projects, the sale or purchase of property, receipt of property in the form a gift (either from someone living or as an estate gift), the leasing of property, and use of property to secure a loan. David Fisher serves as liaison with the Church Corporation and he may be contacted via email: dfisher@epicenter.org.

Reference of Operational Recommendations

The following is a list of suggestions offered by the Commission on Schools, the National Association of Episcopal Schools, and the Southwestern Association of Episcopal Schools. While primarily for parish day schools, many suggestions are applicable to independent schools as well. Recognizing that a parish that strives to reflect a model of Christian community can be a vital force for stability and moral centeredness, careful attention must be paid to ensuring good communication and understanding between and among the various constituencies of the parish family. When congregations and schools work effectively and communicate openly, their ministries will be strengthened.

1. Mutual Ministry

In a parish day school the rector shall ultimately be responsible for the religious life of the school, taking a leadership role in chapel services and collaborating with the head of school in the appointment and oversight of any chaplain and the selection and implementation of religious curricula for the school.

The rector, as canonical chair of the school board, is expected to attend all meetings of the board and shall be invited to attend and participate in significant events in the life of the school. By canon the rector may delegate the role of chair to an appointed or elected president of the board.

The head of school should be considered a member of the church staff, attending church staff meetings as necessary, regularly reporting to the vestry, and invited to attend and participate in special events in the life of the parish.

Regular opportunities should be scheduled for the rector and head of school to meet and establish a mutually supportive relationship.

Regular opportunities should be provided for the vestry and school board to meet together and for the establishment of joint committees to consider mutual concerns. The parish and school should continually seek to share information and enhance communication.

2. Rector Search Process

When the office of rector is vacant, the diocesan guidelines for parishes with schools should be used to involve the school in the search process. Include a knowledgeable school board member who is a church member on the search committee.

The head of school should not be asked to resign when there is a change in the office of rector so as to ensure continuity through the academic year and honor the terms of any employment contract in force.

3. Head of School

Recognizing that the health and stability of the school is dependent on stable leadership, the head of school should have a contract of at least one academic year's duration, preferable multi-year, reviewed annually.

Create a policy statement that describes the hiring, evaluating, and termination procedures for the head of school including the role of the rector as a member of the search committee and the one who approves the final selection.

Designate the head of school as the person with delegated responsibility for the operation of the school and for hiring, evaluating, and terminating school staff.

4. Bylaws and/or Policy Manuals

Include a policy about employment practices, such as, 'To avoid the appearance of favoritism and conflicts of interest, the employment of relatives (related by blood or marriage) of the Head of School that results in a direct or indirect supervisory, evaluation, or reporting relationship to the Head of School is strongly discouraged.

Also, no current employee of the school, or any relative of a current employee of the school, shall serve on the school board, vestry, or Bishop's Committee.

Include a statement that delineates the roles and responsibilities of the parents' association or any other group affiliated with the school and clearly acknowledges the final authority of the school board.

Create a clear fundraising policy that specifies the board member in charge of approving such requests and organizing how the scheduling, planning, and implementation will occur.

Write a statement of the grievance procedure for all personnel.

Include a statement regarding compliance with all Diocesan policies, especially that on sexual misconduct. Detail the required training for Safeguarding God's Children for both staff and volunteers.

Write a clear definition of the roles and responsibilities of the rector, head of school, vestry, and school board and the reporting relationship of each to the other.

5. Student Admissions

The school may give priority to Episcopal students in admissions. This prioritization and any other (such as siblings of currently enrolled students) shall be published in admissions documents.

6. Conflicts

When conflicts occur, which are not easily resolved, the church and the school are encouraged to seek a neutral third party to consult with them before problems escalate to a crisis stage. The Commission on Schools and both SAES and NAES can offer assistance in this regard. Conflict resolution teams that are not affiliated with the church may also be used.

Additional Resources for Episcopal Schools

Southwestern Association of Episcopal Schools (SAES) 1420 4th Avenue, Suite 29 Canyon, TX. 79015 866-655-7237 www.swaes.org

National Association of Episcopal Schools (NAES) 815 Second Ave. Suite 313 New York, NY 10017 800-334-7626 www.episcopalschools.org

Effective Communications

The Episcopal schools of the Diocese of Texas use many resources to engage both their current parents and invite inquiries and interest from prospective parents. In an informal survey of the methods used to communicate with current parents, the following information was provided by those schools (note: please evaluate these resources for compatibility for each school):

Resources with current parents:

Most used electronic resources:

Email – email blasts, links to parent portals on school website, or individual notes to parents

School website programs – ie, Tadpole, Classdojo, Mailchimp, Remind.com, HeadMaster, SignUpGenius, etc.

Facebook - with private pages for each class or teacher

E-newsletters – every other week to once a month; i.e., Constant Contact

Monthly calendars posted on website

Evites – to upcoming school events

Texting – to individual parents

Most used print resources:

Daily or weekly folder that goes back and forth from home, “Monday folders”, Monday (or Friday) messages from the Head of School in take-home folders

Newsletters from Head and/or classroom teacher every other week

Personal contacts:

Parent conferences

Meet the Teachers gatherings prior to reenrollment; teachers present overview of new grade

Coffee talks after morning drop-off; invitations to chapel and coffee

Phone voicemail message blasts

Phone calls – private conversations most effective

Encouraging positive word of mouth exchanges

Visual resources:

Bulletin board reminders near classrooms and office

Event signs near the school and church signs

TV “loops” visible near the office for those waiting to view past school activities

Resources with Prospective Parents:

Word of mouth – encourage positive messages shared by current parents with friends

Social media, Mom’s Blogs, Facebook, updated website

Interactive website so initial inquiries and contacts can be made; require a campus visit

A calendar of school visits; classroom observations

Encourage referrals from current and former parents; add to admission materials 6.

Participate in a community Private School Preview, if available

Prospective parent lunch

Offer coffee and workshops to highlight areas of programming at the school

Email follow-up after inquiry and visits

Diocesan Journal Report

Submitted for Volume I of the 175th Annual Council (February 2024)

The EDOT sponsored a day-conference at Camp Allen for the heads & directors of our Episcopal schools on March 30, 2023. At this gathering, Southwestern Association of Episcopal Schools Executive Director Rob Devlin spoke on the most significant challenges faced by school leaders, the chair of the Commission on Schools gave a presentation on the vocation of school leadership, and The Rev. Canon Lisa Burns (in her role as Canon for Wellness) presented on the care of the soul in challenging times. Building on the success of this event, another diocesan-sponsored day conference at Camp Allen has been planned for March 2024. The overall objective of these efforts is to support the resilient leadership of Episcopal schools within this diocese.

Faced with continued declining enrollment, the following 3 schools closed during the reporting period, October 2022 to October 2023: St. Thomas the Apostle Episcopal School, Nassau Bay, St. Mark’s Episcopal School, Richmond, and Holy Trinity Episcopal School, Houston. Also, when 2 programs combined for reporting purposes, the total number of reporting schools further decreased by 1. Year-

over-year, while the number of schools declined from 58 to 54 schools, total enrollment across the diocese increased by 184 students, for a total of 12,442 students. This marks the highest enrollment since I began tracking in 2018. The smallest schools (those ≤ 50 students) actually decreased as a group by 92 students. While mid-sized schools gained modestly, much of the enrollment gain was found in the group of larger schools (those >300 students).

Keeping track of accreditation: 2 of the closed schools (noted above) had been accredited. Among existing schools, Trinity Episcopal School, Fort Worth was accredited by SAES during the 2022-2023 reporting period. Another school, First Steps Montessori, Houston (St. John the Divine), has a site visit with American Montessori Society (AMS) scheduled for the first week of December, 2023.

There were 11 transitions of top leadership in schools, a number which remains historically high but is trending in the direction of greater stability compared to the 16 turnovers in the previous reporting period (2021-2022). The 11 new heads/directors in place as of the 2023 Annual Report are as follows:

Holy Cross Kids Preschool, Sugar Land	Lisa Hebert , Director
St. Cuthbert School, Houston	Melinda Wahl , Director
Trinity School of Texas	Cindy Verhalen , Head of School
Grace Episcopal School, Houston	Caitlin Powell , Head of School
St. Francis Episcopal School, Houston	Dr. Chelsea Collins , Head of School
All Saints' Episcopal School, Tyler	Dr. Mark Desjardins , Head of School
Good Shepherd Episcopal School, Austin	Rachel Duree , Interim Head of School
Archway Academy, Houston	Andrew Warren , Clinical Director
Trinity Episcopal School, Galveston	Mark Fallo , Head of School
St. Stephen's Episcopal School, Houston	Dr. Troy Roddy , Head of School
St. Mark's Episcopal Day School, Austin	Becky Simpson , Head of School

David C. Dearman, Chair

School Summary, 2023-2024 Reporting Period

EDOT Schools Total Number of Students: 12,442 ▲				
<i>Schools by Highest Grade Level</i>		<i>Schools by Total Enrollment Groupings</i>		
Preschool/Kinder (may include Infant-Kinder)	31 ▼	with ≤ 50 students	11 ▼	
Elementary (may include up to 5 th Grade)	3 ▼	with $>$ than 50 students and $<$ 300 students	32 ▼	
Middle School (may include up to 8 th Grade)	9	with $>$ 300 students	11	
High School (may include up to 12 th Grade)	11			
Total Schools in the EDOT	54	Total Schools in the EDOT	54	

Other Stats	
Students of Color - Total Enrollment: 3,271 (approx. 26%) ▲	Total # of Employees: 2,868 ▲
Students Receiving Financial Aid: 1,873 (approx....15%) ▼	# Accredited Schools: 43 (80%) ▼ ▲ ¹

¹ The total # of accredited schools decreased by 1, but the percentage increased from 76% (2022-2023) to 80% partially due to the decrease in reporting schools from 58 to 54.

Additional Diocesan Resources & Policies

- 1) **School Organizational Documents** (Certificate of Formation & By-Laws) including revisions require the consent of the Bishop per the Canons of the Diocese of Texas (Title III, Canon 9). School leaders may forward questions or concerns regarding their organizational documents (Certificate of Formation & By-Laws) to the following email address: (registrar@epicenter.org).

- 2) **EDOT Intake Officers**: Rectors and heads of school may face acute difficulties or crises about which they will need to consult with a Diocesan executive. These situations include but are not limited to Safeguarding violations, criminal behavior, intractable conflict between school leaders, severely negative publicity, threatened lawsuits, and certain unresolved human resources matters. The designated diocesan intake officers for these conversations are:
 - The Rev. Canon Lisa Burns (lburns@epicenter.org)
 - The Rev. Canon Christine Faulstich (cfaulstich@epicenter.org)

Location of Schools by City

Angleton	Holy Comforter
Austin	All Saints'
	Good Shepherd
	St. Andrew's
	St. David's
	St. George's
	St. Mark's
	St. Matthew's
	St. Michael's
	St. Stephen's
	Trinity
Bastrop	Calvary
Beaumont	All Saints'
Bellaire	Episcopal High
Bellville	St. Mary's
College Station	St. Thomas'
Conroe	St. James'
Friendswood	Good Shepherd

Fort Worth	All Saints'
	Trinity
Galveston	Trinity
Georgetown	Grace
Houston	Archway Academy
	Ascension
	Cathedral House
	First Steps Montessori
	Grace
	Holy Spirit
	St. Andrew's
	St. Christopher's
	St. Cuthbert's
	St. Francis'
	St. Mark's
	St. Martin's
	St. Stephen's
	St. Thomas'
Killeen	St. Christopher's
Kingwood	Good Shepherd
LaGrange	St. James'
Lindale	St. Luke's
Longview	Trinity
Lufkin	St. Cyprian's
Marshall	Trinity
Missouri City	St. Catherine of Sienna
Nacogdoches	Christ
Pearland	St. Andrew's Academy
Richmond	Calvary
Round Rock	St. Richard's
Sugar Land	Holy Cross
Temple	St. Francis'
The Woodlands	Trinity
Tyler	All Saints'
Waco	St. Paul's
Woodville	St. Paul's