**SAINT EPHREM**

**PARISH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM**

2018

**PREP FAMILY HANDBOOK**

**Forming Disciples of Jesus Christ**

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

**SAINT EPHREM**

**PARISH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM**

**HANDBOOK**

THIS HANDBOOK CONTAINS POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR SAINT EPHREM PARISH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM (PREP). THE PROGRAM MAY CHANGE ANY OF ITS POLICIES AND PROCEDURES AS NEEDED AND APPLY THEM AS CIRCUMSTANCES DICTATE.

IN THE EVENT OF SUCH CHANGE, PARENTS WILL BE GIVEN PROMPT NOTIFICATION AND PROVIDED WITH AN ADDENDUM IF NECESSARY.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT A PARTICULAR POLICY OR PROCEDURE PLEASE CONTACT THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR.

IT IS UNDERSTOOD THT BOTH STUDENTS AND PARENTS MUST ACCEPT AND ABIDE BY THE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES CONTAINED IN THIS HANDBOOK IN ORDER FOR THE STUDENT TO ATTEND SAINT EPHREM PREP.

*Revised 3/2018*

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# MISSION STATEMENT& PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

## PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

Canon Law, the law of the Church, states that “parents above others are obliged to form their children in the faith and practice of Christian life by word and example (Can. 774 §2). The General Directory for Catechesis, the National Directory for Catechesis, and many other Church documents resound the same sentiment. St. Ephrem Parish recognizes and affirms parents in their role as the primary catechists of their children. Its parish religious education program (PREP) exists to assist parents in fulfilling their obligation by providing them with a formal, structured, and planned program of catechesis and formation.

## MISSION STATEMENT

Saint Ephrem PREP exists solely for the purpose of evangelizing the students and their families in the gospel of Jesus Christ as well as

* to deepen their awareness and understanding of God’s loving presence in their lives,
* to strengthen their relationship with God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
* to provide them with opportunities to live and give witness to their Catholic faith.

**To achieve this end, we**

**Proclaim** the Good News of Jesus Christ through our words and actions in order to prepare both students and parents to live and give witness to their Catholic faith.

**\*\*Educate** students and their families in the Catechism of the Catholic Church through a formal, structured, and planned program of catechesis as well as endeavor to help them understand how our Catholic faith gives expression to our relationship with God.

**Form** our students and families in their relationship with God by helping them to grow in their awareness of God’s constant presence in their lives as well as provide them with opportunities to respond to His presence with love and devotion.

**Serve** each other, our parish community, and the local community at large by providing our students and their families with ongoing opportunities to respond to Christ’s command to love and serve others.

**Pray** to God and for each other through student and family participation in ongoing spiritual and devotional opportunities throughout the year.

# POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

## ADMISSION

Enrollment in Saint Ephrem PREP is open to those families registered in St. Ephrem Parish and to those non-registered families who obtain a letter of permission from the pastor of their own parish. Registration extends from Kindergarten to and including 7th grade. Students who are non-sequential or who have had no religious instruction form an RCIA class adapted for children.

Parents/Guardians must provide the following documentation at the time of enrollment:

* A completed Registration Form including emergency contact information, school IEPs, medical concerns
* A valid email address, phone numbers including cell phone (requested on the Registration Form)
* A copy of the student’s baptismal certificate
* A parish weekly offering envelope showing registration number
* A copy of any court ordered custody agreement, if applicable
* Tuition Fee or deposit of at least $25per child with payment plan in place

If a family registered in St. Ephrem Parish transfers their child into our PREP program from another Catholic School (including St. Ephrem Catholic School) or another CCD/PREP Program, a copy of the student’s permanent record from his or her former Catholic school or parish religious education program must also be provided at the time of registration.

It is the parents’ responsibility to secure and provide required documents. No student will be considered fully enrolled until all of the necessary documentation has been received.

### NON-PARISHIONER FAMILIES

Families who are not registered members of St. Ephrem Parish must provide a letter of permission from the pastor of the parish in which they are registered, and submit the letter of permission with all other registration documentation at the time of initial registration. This letter of permission does not need to be renewed and is valid for as long as the child attends the program.

## YEARLY CALENDAR

Our PREP Program extends from the Sunday after Labor Day until the Sunday before Mother’s Day, with the exception of major holidays. Therefore, there are no classes scheduled for the Sunday after Thanksgiving, the Sunday between Christmas and New Years Day, and on Easter Sunday.

## ARRIVAL PROCEDURES AND CLASS SCHEDULE

Each Sunday, students should arrive at their homeroom by 8:45 AM. Students enter the school via St. Ephrem Church vestibule. Hall Monitors oversee that only parents who accompany their children may enter the classroom area. Ordinarily, parents may not accompany children to the second floor classrooms.

Students attend the 9:00 AM Mass as a class. Instruction begins after Mass until dismissal at 11:30 AM

## CUSTODY POLICY

Saint Ephrem PREP 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 PREP with the latest, most up-to-date Custodial Order or Custody Agreement. St. Ephrem PREP 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 that document to the program director 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 program will and must assume that parents share legal custody.

Our 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, our program 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 program director 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 program director with an official copy of the court order or custody section of the divorce decree.

In situations with shared legal custody, the parish program expects the cooperation of both parents.

## CYO SPORTS

To be eligible to play CYO sports, a child must be enrolled in a Catholic School or Parish Religious Education Program. Those playing CYO sports for St. Ephrem parish are required to adhere to this policy.

Any student who enrolls in St. Ephrem Parish Religious Education Program in order to meet this eligibility requirement and then drops from enrollment at the end of the playing season will be prohibited from playing CYO sports at St. Ephrem in the next sport season. It must be understood that enrollment in the PREP program means completion of a full year of studies in the religious education program. This prohibition extends to CYO sports conducted at other parishes for which St. Ephrem CYO members have permission to play.

No exceptions for or modifications to this policy will be made.

## DISMISSAL

Only parents of children in Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grade are permitted to enter the school building at dismissal time. The Hall Monitors require parents to wait until 11:30 AM before allowing them to approach their child’s classroom. Older siblings may also join their parents at the younger child’s classroom.

### STUDENT PICK-UP PROCEDURES:

**All vehicles are expected to drive slowly around to the parking lot at the back of the school.**

Staff will be on hand to help supervise the students from grades 3 through 7 as they dismiss. Parents and those responsible for picking up your children are expected to follow the directions of staff members in the school yard parking lot. Traffic Monitors will assist so that dismissal is orderly and safe. They are there to help ensure the safety of all children and should be respected by both adults and students alike.

## DRESS CODE

Saint Ephrem PREP has no formal dress code. However, we expect students to dress in a manner that reflects the virtue of modesty. Since students will attend **Mass**, the rule of thumb is that they **dress up** rather than dress down. General guidelines are listed below:

* Students should dress comfortably according to the weather, but modesty in dress must be maintained at all times.
* Shorts, bare midriffs, t-shirts with inappropriate images or sayings are not permitted.

The Director of Religious Education reserves the right to take disciplinary action for dress code violations.

## ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Saint Ephrem PREP realizes that devices such as cell phones and smart phones have become a necessary and convenient tool in maintaining communication between parents and children. In order to prevent such devices from becoming a distraction while in class we have established the following policy:

* Students who bring cell phones or smart phones to school must keep these devices turned off and out of sight. At no time during the session are students permitted to use them.
* Communication with parents during PREP hours must be done in and under the supervision of the PREP Office staff.

## ENROLLMENT

Saint Ephrem PREP is structured around incremental learning. That is, each year builds upon the learning of the previous year. Therefore, it is essential that participants remain enrolled in the program consistently from year-to-year.

Any student who does not re-enroll in the program for a period of one year or more and who does not enroll in another CCD, PREP, or Catholic School during that period **will be placed in the grade level they were scheduled to attend** prior to their leaving the program. For example, if after completing 3rd grade, a student does not re-register until 6th grade, it must be understood that the student has missed two years of formation and will therefore be placed into an RCIA class adapted for children. Since he/she has lost more than one year of instruction, the class is designed to bring the child to the level of understanding that has been neglected. The student may not be admitted to a sacramental grade for at least two years and depending on readiness, may be delayed longer.

Any student who does not complete the program year due to voluntarily withdrawing from the program, being dismissed from the program because of a disciplinary incident, or failing to meet the program requirements, will be required to repeat the grade level upon re-enrollment.

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia **REQUIRES** a minimum of two consecutive years of formation prior to a child receiving a sacrament. Students who leave the program following First Holy Communion in grade 3 and re-enroll in grade 6 in order to receive Confirmation DO NOT meet this requirement. Therefore, reception of Confirmation will be deferred. (See above explanation.)

## FAMILY VACATIONS

We understand that work schedules and family finances may preclude families from taking vacations during the summer months when school is not in session. While family vacations during the school year may prove to be relaxing and rewarding for students and their families, they do present difficulties for PREP students and for catechists. Please make every effort not to plan family vacations during the school year.

Should a family elect to take a family vacation during the school year, only one such vacation (i.e., one absence) will be considered an excused absence per academic year. Saint Ephrem PREP will be under **no obligation** to provide materials and lessons, including assignments, homework, and projects in advance of such an absence. However, students are responsible for completing all missed work upon their return to the program. It is their responsibility, (not the catechist’s) to ask for the study, written work, or projects they have missed.

## STUDENT ABSENCE

Parents are required to report all student absences by calling **215-639-4895** or emailing the PREP address: [religioused.ste@gmail.com](mailto:religioused.ste@gmail.com). If no one is available to answer the phone, you may leave a message indicating the student’s name, grade, and the name of the student’s catechist. To ensure the safety of the child, the program staff will email families to verify an absence if no phone call or email is received.

**Understandably, late arrivals or early dismissals due to appointments or social events including sports events or competitions are strongly discouraged.**

If notification is not received concerning an absence via the methods above, the absence will be considered **unexcused** and noted as such in the student’s permanent record. After the third unexcused absence the program director will contact the parents. When frequent and unexcused absences occur, it may be recommended that the student repeat the grade. If long-term absence is necessitated due to illness or family situations, parents must contact the Coordinator of Religious Education to arrange a suitable way to complete the grade level requirements. (Please note, that family vacations, sports or other outside activities are not included in this category.) Promotion to the next grade level is not automatic.

### EXTENDED ABSENCES

Extended student absences due to illness require a doctor’s note upon return to the program. An extended absence is defined as an absence that spans two or more consecutive weeks. Parents should be in regular contact with their child’s catechist during an extended absence in an effort to obtain missed assignments and class work.

Contact with the student’s catechist is key to understanding the situation.

### EXCUSED ABSENCES

Absences will be excused for illness or injury, education-related activities (such as required school recitals), family emergencies, and family vacations (only 1 absence per academic year). A phone call or an email on the day of the absence is required to have an absence noted as excused.

### UNEXCUSED ABSENCES

Any absence that does not meet the definition of an Excused Absence as defined above will be considered unexcused. In addition, any legitimate absence that meets the definition of an excused absence and is NOT reported to the program director as specified will be noted as unexcused. Examples of ***unexcused absences include, but are not limited to, team sports related activities, such as a game or practice, non-school related extracurricular activities, such as dance recitals or martial arts, etc.***

## SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM

Saint Ephrem PREP participates in and adheres to the Safe Environment Program (SEP) mandated by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. This policy has been in effect in all Archdiocesan parishes, schools, and children’s programs since 2002, and has undergone several revisions as the SEP and State Law has evolved.

All program employees, staff, and volunteers are subject to State Police Background and Child Abuse History Clearance Checks. They are also required to participate in several training programs, including training on PA State Law concerning the mandated reporting of child abuse. These trainings are designed to help adults provide for a safe environment in which young people can learn. All trainings and clearances must be completed prior to working in an environment with children.

In addition to the background checks, clearances, and trainings required of employees and volunteers who work with children in a parish setting, which includes school and PREP, all students in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia take part in grade appropriate instruction on the topic of keeping themselves safe. Catechists in Saint Ephrem PREP have been assisted in teaching these lessons by a member of the Bensalem Police Department. The curriculum is provided by the Archdiocesan Office of Catholic Education in conjunction with the Office for Children and Youth Protection. These lessons are generally presented to all students at the beginning of the second semester. The lessons are available for review in the PREP office upon parental request. They are also available for viewing on the Office for Catechetical Formation’s website: <http://archphila.org/catechetical/resources/lessons.htm>.

Parents are welcome to be present when these instructions are presented.

Parents who wish to preclude their children from participating in these lessons must submit a written request to the program director, which will become part of the student’s permanent record. A copy of the parental request will also be provided to the Archdiocesan Office for Children and Youth Protection per their policy. Such written requests must be renewed yearly.

## SNOW EMERGENCIES & PROGRAM CANCELLATIONS

In the event of inclement weather, tune your radio to KYW News Radio 1060 AM. Internet users can log on to [www.kyw1060.com](http://www.kyw1060.com) for a complete list of school closings and community cancellations. We will make an announcement on KYW’s community cancellation bulletins. In addition, those families that provide an email address at the time of registration will receive an email notification of the cancellation. Please be sure to listen to KYW 1060 AM throughout the day in the event of a late cancellation. This will be the only form of notification provided about program cancellations.

## TUITION

Tuition is a required part of Saint Ephrem PREP and ensures that our program can ­provide students and their families with the most current and best catechetical resources for their formation needs.

Tuition is due in full at the time of registration. However, being sensitive to the needs of our families, a payment plan is available upon request.

In the event that a student voluntarily leaves the program during the program year, or is dismissed from the program for any reason including, but not limited to a disciplinary incident, or the possession of drugs, drug paraphernalia, or a weapon on parish property, no refund of tuition or material fees will be made to the family.

In the event that a parent withdraws a student during the program year, tuition should be paid in full before records are transferred to another PREP program.

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## VISITORS TO THE SCHOOLBUILDING

* ***NO ONE IS PERMITTED TO ENTER ANY AREA OF THE SCHOOL BUILDING WITHOUT THE EXPRESSED PERMISSION OF THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR OR HER DESIGNEE. VISITORS ARE REQUIRED TO REPORT DIRECTLY TO THE PREP OFFICE.***
* No visitor is permitted to allow another person to enter the school building unless directed to do so by the program director or another member of the program staff.
* All visitors are required to exit via the church vestibule door.
* For the safety and security of our program participants and staff, no other exit is permitted to be used.

## VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are welcomed and encouraged to share their gifts of time and talent in service to the program. We are always seeking additional volunteers to assist with the arrival and dismissal of students, to serve as aides in the classroom, and to serve as catechists.

All parents/guardians are required to abide by the Safe Environment Program of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, which includes the following:

### REQUIRED TRAININGS

* *Safe Environment Training* session. This training is mandated by and provided through the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. The training session is about two and a half hours long and must be completed by new employees and volunteers within 90 days of beginning service with Saint Ephrem PREP. This training needs to be completed one time only.
* *Standards of Ministerial Behavior and Boundaries (SMBB)*. All volunteers and employees must agree in writing to abide by and uphold the SMBB, which will be presented at the *Safe Environment Training Session*.
* *Mandated Reporter Training:* This training is required by PA State Law and is provided by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. It consists of three 20 minutes training modules, which can be completed online. This training will be updated from time to time as PA State Law requires. Volunteers will be notified when this training requires updating. The entire training must be completed within 14 days of beginning service with Saint Ephrem PREP.

### REQUIRED BACKGROUND CHECKS

* *PA State Police Criminal Record Check*. To be completed prior to beginning service with Saint Ephrem PREP. These checks must be renewed every five years.
* *PA Child Abuse History Clearance*. To be completed prior to beginning service with the Saint Ephrem PREP. Must be renewed every five years.
* *Federal Background Check (Fingerprinting):* Required only of volunteers or employees who reside outside of Pennsylvania or who have resided outside Pennsylvania any time within the last 10 years (fee paid for by the volunteer and reimbursed by the parish after completing 3 months of volunteer service). To be completed prior to beginning service in Saint Ephrem PREP.

## WITHDRAWAL

Parents who withdraw their child from the program prior to August 31 will receive a full refund of tuition paid to date. Parents who withdraw their child from the program between September 1 and 20 will receive a refund of tuition paid less a $50.00 administrative fee per child. No refund of tuition paid will be made after September 20.

# FORMATION & ACADEMIC LIFE

## ASSESSMENT/TESTING

Students will be administered the Archdiocesan Mid-Year Assessment in mid January, and the Archdiocesan Year-End Assessment in mid April. Study Guides for these assessments will be provided to parents in a timely manner prior to each assessment date. These assessments are weighted as any other major test administered in the program.

Quizzes and tests may be administered during the PREP year at the discretion of the catechists. All catechists are required to administer a minimum of two tests or quizzes for each marking period. Catechists may also assess students in other ways such as graded homework assignments, writing assignments, etc. Advanced notice to students will be provided by catechists. Parents are strongly encouraged to review notes and updates sent home on a weekly basis.

Students need to exhibit mastery of the required material for their grade level to be considered for promotion at the end of the year.

## CLASS PARTICIPATION

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 insure that they have the proper materials for class including, but not limited to, their textbook, writing implement, and copybook. Additional supplies may be required and will be conveyed by catechists.

## CURRICULUM

The curriculum for Saint Ephrem PREP follows the religion guidelines established by Archdiocese of Philadelphia. These Guidelines may be viewed and downloaded by parents at: <http://archphila.org/catechetical/resources/resources.htm>.

## DISCIPLINE

Saint Ephrem PREP is designed to assist parents with the faith formation of their children, as well as foster values and behavior that are in accord with the teaching of the Catholic Church. The program has **NO TOLERANCE** for behaviors that are contrary to Catholic faith and morals, or the Gospel, including but not limited to ongoing acts of obstinacy, improper language, fighting, physical, emotional or psychological intimidation, bullying, vandalism, demeaning behavior such as name-calling, obscene language or gestures, and harassment. Such behaviors violate the central teaching of our faith and will not be tolerated in any form from students or their family members.

These categories do not cover every possible situation. The program director makes the final determination of what is considered appropriate or inappropriate behavior, both in and out of class, in the program generally, and outside the program, where such improper behavior affects the program community. The program director will make the final determination as to what behaviors warrant disciplinary action.

Conduct by students or parents/guardians, or anyone acting on their behalf, incompatible with the educational and religious mission of the Parish is grounds for disciplinary action, including but not limited to, immediate dismissal of the participant, as well as reporting the incident to the appropriate legal authorities where appropriate.

Additionally, in the case of threats of violence or harassment, in any form, including oral, written, or electronic, by a student against any member of the program community, the student, if suspended but not dismissed, may be required to have psychological or psychiatric clearance before returning to the program.

In the event that a student engages in any of the above listed behaviors or any other inappropriate conduct, and has failed to respond to a catechist’s attempt to stop or correct the behavior, the student will be removed from the classroom and the student’s parents/guardians will be immediately notified by the program director. Depending on the nature and severity of the incident the program director will

1. Schedule a conference with the parents/guardians, student, and catechist to address the incident.
2. Suspend the student from the program. In the event that a student is suspended from the program due to a disciplinary incident, the parents/guardians will be required to complete missed classroom assignments with their child at home, which must be completed by the time the student returns from suspension. Failure to complete missed assignments during the suspension may result in dismissal from the program.
3. Dismiss the student from the program. In the event that a student is dismissed from the program due to a disciplinary incident, the parents/guardians will be provided with the option of having their child repeat his or her current grade level the following school year or opting to enroll in another PREP Program at a neighboring parish in the fall. In either case, no refund of tuition or material fees will be made.

Saint Ephrem PREP reserves the right to supersede the forgoing course of action depending on the particular circumstances of any given situation.

### BULLYING

St. Ephrem PREP has not had to confront incidents of bullying in the past; however, we recognize that a safe, secure and respectful environment is necessary for children to learn, achieve, and build appropriate relationships with others.

The following definition of bullying helps to clarify inappropriate interpersonal behavior and simply serves to reinforce the definition.

**Bullying involves actions or words against another for the purpose of inflicting physical or emotional harm or discomfort or damage to a person’s reputation that is intimidating or threatening and affects the learning environment**. The following describes types of bullying but is not an exhaustive list:

* Hitting, kicking, shoving, spitting, hair pulling, or throwing an object
* Getting another person to hit or harm a student
* Teasing, name-calling, making critical remarks or threatening in person or by other means
* Demeaning and making another the victim of jokes
* Making rude and/or threatening gestures
* Excluding or rejecting the student
* Intimidating (bullying), extorting or exploiting
* Spreading harmful rumors or gossip

If a child feels that he/she is being bullied, he/she should tell a catechist, adult volunteer and/or the program director immediately so that action can be taken to remediate the situation. Parents/guardians and the pastor will be notified of the situation, and Law Enforcement Officials may be contacted if warranted (e.g., someone threatened with a weapon, terroristic threats, etc.)**Although the above-mentioned may be perceived as extreme, it serves as a guide and fore-warning should these measures need to be employed.**

### VANDALISM

Saint Ephrem PREP shares space with the St. Ephrem School community. As such it is imperative that a healthy relationship be maintained between the two programs. All students are expected to respect parish property, which includes the school facilities and all items in the classroom.

Items in the desks of St. Ephrem School students should be respected. Catechists provide classroom supplies and will make them available to students when needed.

Incidents of vandalism to parish property, including school facilities, and the property of St. Ephrem School students will be taken most seriously. The parents of any student who is found to be responsible for an incident of vandalism will be required to make restitution for the damage inflicted.

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## GRADES

### ACADEMIC MARKING CODE

Saint Ephrem PREP follows the Archdiocesan Marking Code for Major Subjects established by the Office for Catholic Education. Academic marks are determined by tests, homework, independent projects, and a variety of assessment practices. The marking code for Academic Progress is outlined below for all grades.

**A+ 97-100**

**A 90-96**

**B+ 87-89**

**B 80-86**

**C+ 77-79**

**C 70-76**

### Cooperation and Behavior

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia also has a system in place for reporting to parents how their children conduct themselves. This system is also used for reporting student’s effort and study skills. The indicators are as listed below:

**+**  = Consistency

= Often

**/** = Sometimes

**X** = Rarely

## 

## HOMEWORK

Homework is a required part of a student’s participation in Saint Ephrem PREP. Homework will be assigned on a weekly basis during the program. Homework assignments will be used to reinforce the day’s lessons and 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. Parents should expect a minimum of one hour’s worth of homework each week.

Consistent failure to complete homework assignments will warrant a conference with parents. If the work remains incomplete following the conference, further conferencing with parents will be necessary.

Should parents have questions concerning homework assignments, they should contact their child’s catechist who is most able to answer their questions and offer explanations regarding the matter. Contact may also be made with the DRE at [religioused.ste@gmail.com](mailto:religioused.ste@gmail.com).

## PROMOTION

In order to be eligible for promotion to the next PREP level at the end of the program year, a student must exhibit mastery of the material required of them. Mastery is evaluated through the administration of tests, quizzes, and the Archdiocesan Assessments as well as any other method deemed appropriate by the catechist. In addition, the timely completion of assignments and homework, classroom participation, and overall attendance will also be factors considered when evaluating a student’s eligibility for year-end promotion.

**PROGRESS REPORTS**

Progress Reports are issued twice a year: in January and in May. The report card grades are derived from the work produced during the marking period. This work may include tests, quizzes, projects, homework, written and oral presentations, class participation, and classroom behavior. The Archdiocesan Mid-Year Assessment will be included in the 1st semester grades and the Year-End Assessment will be included in the 2nd semester grades.

Parents are required to sign progress reports issued for the 1stsemester and returned to the catechist the week after they are received.

## RESTROOMS

Parents are strongly encouraged to have children use the restroom prior to arriving at class. Since the PREP children attend the 9:00 AM Mass, it is necessary to minimize the number of distractions during that time. Not only does the child miss part of the Mass but the catechist aide who accompanies him/her also misses. Emergencies are certainly understood and restroom breaks are scheduled during program hours.

## 

## SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Preparation for the sacraments of Penance, Eucharist, and Confirmation is incorporated into the program curriculum and is in addition to said curriculum.

To be eligible to begin sacramental preparation, a student must meet the following criteria:

* Student must be enrolled in PREP for ***two consecutive years.***
* Student must be in Level 2 or above for Penance
* Student must be in Level 3 or above for First Eucharist.
* Student must be in Level 7 or above for Confirmation.

**Please note that the children of parents who drop from the program after 3rd grade with the intention of re-registering before preparation for Confirmation will be required to “make up” for the number of years missed and will be required to attend RCIA classes before entering 6th grade in order to prepare for Confirmation in 7th grade. Education is sequential; our faith formation, as well as our secular education builds upon a logical and step-by-step continuum. It is in the child’s best interest to follow through in the standard year-by-year understanding of how faith received at Baptism is enriched.**

**SPECIAL NOTE REGARDING CONFIRMATION:**

Confirmation is celebrated in Level 7. We strongly discourage parents from removing their children from the program after the reception of Confirmation. “Preparation for life” continues after Confirmation. No parent would remove his/her child from school in the middle of 7th grade and expect him to function in society with only a less-than-complete grade school education. Continued education in the faith is essential.

**NON-PARISHIONER FAMILIES:**

Sacramental candidates are required to receive the sacraments of Eucharist and Confirmation in the parish where their family is registered. Non-parishioner families who desire to have their child receive these sacraments at St. Ephrem must obtain a letter of permission from the pastor of the parish where they are registered.

## TEXTBOOKS

The textbooks used in Saint Ephrem PREP are approved by the Office for Catholic Education. Every student will receive a textbook on the first day of class. This textbook must be brought to class every week. We ask parents to make sure that the textbook can be found in a set place within the home so it is not lost during the academic year. Lost textbooks will need to be replaced. Parents assume full responsibility for all costs associated with the replacement of textbooks including any taxes, shipping, and handling fees if there are no texts in PREP stock.

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## EVACUATION

In the event that an emergency situation occurs that requires the evacuation of the school building to ensure the safety of students and staff, the evacuation protocol will be employed. Students will exit the building in a way similar to a fire drill and remain outside until the building is deemed safe enough for re-entry. Safe areas have been designated should weather become a factor when students need to exit the building.

## INTERNAL LOCK DOWN

It has become necessary for programs to prepare for the potential of an emergency situation that occurs within the school building or in the area surrounding the school. Should a situation present itself where the safety of students and staff might be jeopardized, the internal lock down protocol will be employed. Students and catechists will be restricted to their classrooms and will not be permitted to leave the school building until the area has been deemed safe or the emergency situation has been resolved.

Internal lock downs may be called for by the program director or local authorities in response to an immediate threat to safety. Parents will ***NOT*** be able to access the school building during an internal lock down until the school has been given the all clear by local authorities. For the safety and well-being of our students and staff ***no exceptions*** will be made.

## SHELTER IN PLACE

Shelter in Place is an emergency response plan to the release of hazardous materials in the air. This response can be only be called for by the police or fire departments. If our program is instructed to shelter in place, we would initiate our plan to protect students and staff from the dangerous air outside the building. Once ordered to shelter in place, no one is permitted to enter or leave the building until the all clear signal is given by the local authorities. Opening any door can jeopardize the safety of students and place them in immediate danger. It then becomes our responsibility to care for the basic needs of the children until they can be safely dismissed and sent home.

Once ordered to shelter in place, students will move into the hallways, away from doors and windows. Catechists will take roll. Staff members have been assigned to place heavy plastic coverings over exterior doors and windows. Students will have access to restrooms.

The Bensalem Fire Department states that the maximum time needed for a typical Shelter in Place event would be 5 to 6 hours.

In time of crisis, it is the instinct of all parents to want to come to school and get their children. During most emergency situations, this instinct is right. During a Shelter in Place event, it is not. Our school will be sealed off so no one can enter or leave the building. Anyone coming to school puts him/herself in danger and endangers the safety of students and staff inside the school building. Once the all clear signal is given by local authorities, and time for dismissal arrives, students will be released to parents.

# COMMUNICATION

## CALENDAR AND COMMUNIQUÉS

A yearly PREP calendar will be sent to each family via email and hard copies will be available upon request. This calendar will contain all of the pertinent dates related to the PREP Program

Important reminders, updates, and program related news will be conveyed to parents via the email address provided at the time of student registration. It is the parent’s responsibility to inform the program director of changes to this email address in order to ensure effective communication of program related matters.

## COMMUNICATION

The principle manner of communication between the PREP Office and parents is via email. Parents are requested to call the PREP Office regarding personal matters concerning the program and/or child-related concerns: illness, absence, etc. It is recommended that parents also communicate with their child’s catechist via email should need arise. Catechists communicate with parents via email regarding assignments, projects, behavioral issues, etc. papers. Parents are asked to check their child’s school bag for additional communications that may be sent home after each class.

# CONTACT INFORMATION

Parents should feel free to contact the program director regarding any concerns or problems that may develop during the course of the year. The program director may be contacted using any of the means listed below. However, the quickest response will be obtained via email.

**PREP Office:** 215-639-4895

**E-mail:** religioused.ste@gmail.com

## UPDATING CONTACT INFORMATION

The contact information that you provide at the time of registration will be used as the primary means of contacting you. Updating changes to this information, especially changes to email addresses, is your sole responsibility. In order to receive necessary and vital information pertaining to your child’s participation in our program it is imperative that you notify the PREP Office regarding changes in address, phone numbers, or email.