



ROMAN CATHOLIC  
DIOCESE OF BURLINGTON

# Confirmation Guidelines

2019-2020

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*Preparation for Confirmation should aim at leading the Christian toward a more intimate union with Christ and a more lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit—his actions, his gifts, and his biddings—in order to be more capable of assuming the apostolic responsibilities of Christian life. To this end catechesis for Confirmation should strive to awaken a sense of belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ, the universal Church as well as the parish community. The latter bears special responsibility for the preparation of confirmands.*

*- Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1309*

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The Office of Evangelization and Catechesis  
Revised March 2019

## A Note of Appreciation

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This guide would not have been possible without the input, contributions, and consultation of our Diocesan Faith Formation Advisory Committee. The on-the-ground experience of these parish catechetical leaders was of immense value in creating these Confirmation Guidelines. Thank you:

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St. Catherine of Siena, Hinesburg

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## Introduction

The following guide applies to the 2019-2020 academic year for parishes in the Diocese of Burlington. Candidates during this time will normally be in grades 8-10.

## Structure of the Confirmation Year

Parish Religious Education programs for grades 8-10 are expected to run throughout the academic year, placing a special focus on Confirmation during an 8-session period preceding the Sacrament of Confirmation.<sup>1</sup> In other words, sacramental preparation for Confirmation will be *one part* of the full religious education year, similar to sacramental preparation for the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion. To give an idea of what this might look like, a sample religious education schedule for grades 8-10 is below.

As you can see, this sample parish begins their year on Catechetical Sunday and has Confirmation scheduled for Thursday, May 7<sup>th</sup>. This parish's schedule includes about 10 normal sessions, a service project, 2 days for catechist formation, a Youth Rally, holiday and various school breaks, a parent meeting for Confirmation, 8 sessions for Confirmation preparation, and some follow-up time with students after they receive Confirmation. This is, of course, a sample schedule, but hopefully it is helpful in seeing how the Confirmation curriculum can fit into the year.

| Sample 2019-2020 Religious Education Schedule for grades 8, 9, and 10 |  |                          |  |
|---|--|--------------------------|--|
| Sun., Sept. 15th  | Class 1 (Catechetical Sunday)            | Sun., Jan. 26th          | Class 10 (Vocations Lesson)                      |
| Sun., Sept. 22nd  | Class 2                                  | Sun., Feb. 2nd           | No Class – Break                                 |
| Sun., Sept. 29th  | Class 3                                  | Sun., Feb. 9th           | Winter Rally in Barre, VT                        |
| Sun., Oct. 6th  | Parent and Candidate Meeting             | Sun., Feb. 16th          | Confirmation Session #2                          |
| Sun., Oct. 13th   | Pilgrimage to the Cathedral (Session #1) | Sun., Feb. 23rd          | No Class – Break                                 |
| Sun., Oct. 20th   | No Class – Break                         | Sun., March 1st          | No Class – Break                                 |
| Sun., Oct. 27th   | No Class – Catechist Formation           | Sun., March 8th          | Confirmation Session #3                          |
| Sun., Nov. 3rd  | Class 4                                  | Sun., March 15th         | Confirmation Session #4                          |
| Sun., Nov. 10th   | Class 5                                  | Sun., March 22nd         | Confirmation Session #5                          |
| Sun., Nov. 17th   | Class 6                                  | Sun., March 29th         | Confirmation Session #6                          |
| Sun., Nov. 24th   | Thanksgiving Service Project             | Sun., April 5th          | Confirmation Session #7                          |
| Sun., Dec. 1st  | No Class – Thanksgiving Break!           | Sun., April 12th         | No Class – Easter Break!                         |
| Sun., Dec. 8th  | Class 7                                  | Sun., April 19th         | No Class – Break                                 |
| Sun., Dec. 15th   | Class 8                                  | Sun., April 26th         | No Class – Break                                 |
| Sun., Dec. 22nd   | No Class – Christmas Break!              | Sun., May 3rd            | Confirmation Rehearsal                           |
| Sun., Dec. 29th   | No Class – Christmas Break!              | <b>Thursday, May 7th</b> | <b>Confirmation</b>                              |
| Sun., Jan. 5th  | No Class – Christmas Break!              | Sun., May 10th           | Confirmation Reflection/Celebration (Session #8) |
| Sun., Jan. 12th   | No Class – Catechist Formation           | Sun., May 17th           | Class 11 (Look ahead with students to next year) |
| Sun., Jan. 19th   | Class 9 (Circle of Grace)                |                          |  |

<sup>1</sup> Session 8, however, takes place *after* Confirmation.

## Family Formation

Many of our parishes have moved to a religious education model of family formation. We realize that the above schedule is not directly helpful to such programs or others that don't follow a weekly model. We encourage family formation as a catechetical model because it focuses on parents, encourages them to live the faith at home, and equips them to assume their roles as primary catechists of their children.<sup>2</sup> Some of our most vibrant parishes in the diocese are using this model for religious education. When family formation is done well, it can be beneficial for the parish and for the faith of those families involved. However, we appreciate that Confirmation preparation will likely follow a different schedule in these instances. That being said, we still ask that those Confirmation programs follow the guidelines below in "Elements of a Confirmation Program."

## Who Can Receive Confirmation?

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"Every baptized person not yet confirmed can and should receive the sacrament of Confirmation."<sup>3</sup> In the Diocese of Burlington, for the 2019-2020 year, it is the norm that Catholic students in grades 8-10 who have not yet received the Sacrament of Confirmation are eligible to seek reception of the Sacrament.

In order to be accepted into Confirmation preparation, a candidate should have been actively involved in the parish during the current year as well as the full previous year. If this is not the case, we recommend that the pastor, or the Parish Catechetical Leader (PCL), find ways to involve them in the parish and consider delaying their Confirmation preparation until the next year.

If there is a question about a candidate's readiness for Confirmation, the decision to delay should not be made hastily or arbitrarily. Consequently, Confirmation interviews should be scheduled in such a way as to permit adequate time for decision making before the celebration of the sacrament. More information on this interview can be found below. In considering whether a young person is properly prepared to receive Confirmation, we urge pastors and PCLs to take seriously the candidate's commitment to the faith and understanding of the sacrament. The pastor/administrator, in consultation with the candidate, parents, and catechetical staff, will ultimately make the decision regarding the delay. This should be done with sensitivity and the aim of eliciting greater openness to the grace of the Sacrament of Confirmation, and with a conscious awareness that this sacrament, like all sacraments, is an unmerited gift of God.

## Elements of the Confirmation program

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The *Catechism of the Church* explains that "a candidate for Confirmation who has attained the age of reason must profess the faith, be in the state of grace, have the intention of receiving the sacrament, and be prepared to assume the role of disciple and witness to Christ, both within the ecclesial community and in temporal affairs."<sup>4</sup> Additionally, the Church says that Confirmation preparation programs must intentionally include parents and sponsors and include a retreat experience.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See *The General Directory of Catechesis* (GDC), 226-227, a section titled, "Parents, primary educators of their children." See also St. Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* 36; *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) 222, 1653; *Lumen Gentium* (LG) 11.

<sup>3</sup> CCC 1306.

<sup>4</sup> CCC 1319.

<sup>5</sup> USCCB, *National Directory for Catechesis* (NDC), (Washington, DC., USCCB, 2005) p. 122; CCC 1311.

For the sake of clarity, the list below represents the required elements of a Confirmation program in our diocese. We want to be clear, however, that the sacraments are not something that we can *earn* by checking the right boxes. Rather, these elements are required to best prepare candidates to be properly disposed to receive the unmerited gift of Confirmation. Each of the following elements will be described in full detail in the pages below.

- Active participation in the parish for 2 years prior to reception of Confirmation, shown especially by regular Mass attendance
- Candidate Interview
- Discipleship Plan
- Catechesis for Confirmation
- Retreat Experience

A Confirmation candidate cannot be denied reception of this sacrament because of failure to participate in any one single element of a parish Confirmation program. However, regular attendance at Holy Mass should be considered as the heart of a life of faith and the source from which all other efforts acquire their relevance and importance.

### Candidate Interviews (Pastoral Meetings)<sup>6</sup>

This is an opportunity for the pastor to meet with the candidate to determine their readiness to receive Confirmation. These interviews should be scheduled near the beginning of the academic year, in order to permit adequate time for decision making before the celebration of the sacrament. This interview should help the candidate articulate their personal desire for the sacrament and manifest their readiness to receive this sacrament. Ideally, the pastor conducts this interview. If that is not practical or possible, the pastor can share or delegate this responsibility with others such as the PCL or the Confirmation catechist(s). This is one of the chief elements of preparation that will help the pastor/PCL determine the candidate's readiness to receive Confirmation.

### Discipleship Plan

As a part of their catechetical preparation, candidates will be taught what discipleship looks like in action and then asked to create their own personal discipleship plan. In this discipleship plan, candidates will outline the ways in which they plan to “assume the role of disciple and witness to Christ, both within the ecclesial community and in temporal affairs.”<sup>7</sup> This exercise will lead candidates to create a tangible plan for spiritual growth, parish involvement, and discipleship in everyday life. We recommend that students create their discipleship plan near the beginning of their Confirmation year, so that it can be a helpful resource for the candidate interviews as well as for the candidate's sponsor. Candidates may also include their discipleship plan in their letters to the Bishop.

Discipleship plans will allow parish catechetical leaders, pastors, sponsors, and parents to hold students accountable to their own goals after they've been confirmed. Thus, parishes should keep hard-copy records of these discipleship plans, so they are able to follow up with these students in future months and years. As

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<sup>6</sup> Some have pointed out that calling this an “interview” sends the wrong message – that it is a one-time meeting that you can either pass or fail. While these meetings are an important piece of determining a candidate's readiness for Confirmation, it should not be seen as a “failure” if some candidates are not yet ready for the sacrament. If you prefer to use another name for these interviews, such as “pastoral meetings” or something of that nature, feel free to do so.

<sup>7</sup> CCC 1319.

we seek to increase personal relationship and mentorship in youth ministry, we hope this will be a valuable activity and resource to parishes. You can find a Discipleship Plan Leader’s Guide and Student Sheet in the appendix, forms A-2 and A-3, respectively. The student sheet can be edited to meet your parish’s needs.

### Catechetical Content (What should be taught?)

The catechetical content for Confirmation has been grouped into 8 topics, outlined below. We recommend taking one hour-long session for each topic, except for the retreat experience. A lesson guide for each session can be found in the appendix, form A-1.

| Session             | Topic                                  |
|---------------------|--|
| 1                   | Retreat Experience                     |
| 2                   | The Sacrament of Confirmation          |
| 3                   | Our Desire for God & Salvation History |
| 4                   | The Holy Spirit                        |
| 5                   | Jesus Christ                           |
| 6                   | Mission as Disciples                   |
| 7                   | Challenge of Following Christ          |
| <b>Confirmation</b> |  |
| 8                   | Celebration & Looking Ahead            |

### Retreat Experience<sup>8</sup>

#### Diocesan Retreats

It is important that parishes provide a retreat experience for their Confirmation candidates. The diocese will offer several Confirmation retreats through the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry. Information on these retreats will be posted on our website and sent out through the monthly PCL Newsletter.

#### Other Retreat Experiences

If it is not possible to attend a diocesan retreat, a parish may plan their own retreat experience. This could be an overnight retreat, a one-day retreat, or another experience that the PCL deems appropriate. Whatever the format, we suggest that Confirmation retreat experiences include the following elements:

- A notably *different* environment than the normal religious education sessions.
- Experience of prayer, preferably outside of their normal experience (Lectio Divina, Eucharistic Adoration, the Rosary, Praise and Worship, etc.)
- Opportunity for the Sacrament of Reconciliation
- Opportunity to reflect on God’s work in a candidate’s life
- Opportunity to reflect on candidate’s plan to respond to God’s call

One good (and ready-made!) resource for a retreat is the “Chosen Confirmation Retreat” offered by Ascension Press.<sup>9</sup> They offer a weekend model and a one-day retreat model.

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<sup>8</sup> NDC, p. 122.

<sup>9</sup> Available for free at [http://confirmationstudy.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Retreat\\_Chosen\\_download.pdf](http://confirmationstudy.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Retreat_Chosen_download.pdf)  
This retreat works well even if you haven’t used the *Chosen* program with your students.

## Prayer & Penance<sup>10</sup>

Confirmation preparation should include opportunities for more intense prayer leading up to the reception of Confirmation. Rather than being a session of its own, prayer should be incorporated into each of the eight sessions. Two good places to start would be to model and teach candidates about the forms of prayer<sup>11</sup> and expressions of prayer.<sup>12</sup>

It is also important that the sacrament of Penance be offered regularly and especially before the sacrament of Confirmation to ensure that candidates are in a state of grace when they receive Confirmation.

## Inclusion of Sponsors and Parents<sup>13</sup>

Parents and sponsors should be actively involved in the Confirmation preparation process. At minimum, this means having a parent meeting at the beginning of the year. Ideally, however, parents are included in the whole process and sponsors are empowered to act as spiritual guides for their candidates. To do this, you can include parents and sponsors in the Confirmation sessions, send them home with questions to discuss, or find other creative ways to connect the candidate with these important spiritual guides.

A general template for what information should be covered at an introductory parent meeting can be found in the appendix, form A-1. Many publishers also offer useful templates and guides for parents and sponsor involvement, so be sure to check what your parish's Confirmation text/publisher has to offer.

Prior to actual selection of a sponsor, both candidates and parents should be instructed on the role and responsibility of a sponsor. This catechesis should occur at the parent and candidate meeting near the beginning of the year to allow candidates to select their sponsor as early in the year as possible. Selecting a sponsor early also gives sponsors the opportunity to be involved in as much of the preparation process as possible. For more information on the role of the sponsor, see "Roles of those involved with Confirmation," below.

## Choosing a Name

It is a good and common practice for candidates to choose a name for their Confirmation. The name chosen should be a name of a Catholic saint or blessed whose life inspires them and who they can look up to as a patron saint. This name can be the same name that was chosen for Baptism or a new name. In picking a name, students should be encouraged and reminded that these holy men and women will truly pray for and befriend the candidates in their Christian walk.

## Liturgical Service

We strongly encourage you to involve students in different elements of ministry throughout the year – serving as altar servers, lectors, ushers, greeters, musicians, liturgical planners, etc. While the diocese does not require that students complete a particular number of hours of service in this area, liturgical service should always be a part of a religious education program. Moreover, this form of service is even more important at this age, where students are likely to either deepen their involvement in the parish or vanish

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<sup>10</sup> CCC 1310, 1319.

<sup>11</sup> "The Holy Spirit ... also instructs [the Church] in the life of prayer, inspiring new expressions of the same basic forms of prayer: blessing, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, and praise." CCC 2644. See CCC 2626-2643 for more detail.

<sup>12</sup> "The Christian tradition comprises three major expressions of the life of prayer: vocal prayer, meditation, and contemplative prayer." CCC 2721. See CCC 2700-2719 for more detail.

<sup>13</sup> NDC, p. 122; CCC 1311.



from parish life. If students are not involved in anything except religious education classes, why would they return to the parish after Confirmation? It is important that parishes work to create a real home in the parish for these young people in their community.

## Service Projects

*“Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.” Matthew 25:40*

Service projects, or community service, are an important part of what it means to be a Christian. In serving the community, students learn that being a disciple of Christ goes beyond the walls of our churches and calls us to the peripheries, as Pope Francis so often remarks. While the diocese does not require candidates to complete a particular number of service hours, we do encourage parishes to seek and offer service opportunities appropriate for Confirmation candidates.

## Roles and Requirements of those involved with Confirmation

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### The candidate

- To be willing and have a desire to enter into the process.
- To recognize that he/she, in consultation with his/her parents and under their guidance, has the choice to stop at any point within the process if he/she is unable to make the commitment necessary to be confirmed and that he/she may return when ready to continue.

(Cf. canons 889-891, Code of Canon Law).

### The parents/guardians

- To encourage, support, and affirm their child’s involvement in the Confirmation process.
- To attend any orientation sessions, liturgical rites, and practices associated with the Confirmation process.
- To advise their child regarding the choice of a sponsor.

### The sponsor

- It is desirable, though not necessary, that the sponsor be the same person who fulfilled the role of baptismal sponsor.
- To perform the role of Confirmation sponsor, it is necessary that a person fulfill the following conditions:
  1. Have the aptitude and intention of fulfilling the role of sponsor.
  2. Be at least 16 years of age
  3. Be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has received the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist and who leads a life of faith.
  4. Not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared.
  5. Not be the father or mother of the one to be confirmed.
  6. There is to be only one Confirmation sponsor.

(Cf. canons 873-874, 892-893 Code of Canon Law).

- In addition to the requirements above, it is the role of sponsor to attend any orientation sessions, liturgical rites, and practices associated with the Confirmation process.

### The community

- To support youth before, during and after Confirmation through their prayers, attendance at the Confirmation Mass, and other parish community activities.
- To integrate youth into the life of the whole Church.

### The priest

- To encourage parents, sponsors and the community to take an active part in the process as well as in the process of growing in their own understanding of their faith.
- To be an active presence in the lives of the young people of the parish in as many ways as possible, i.e., visiting group meetings, coming to retreats, supporting youth at liturgies.
- To conduct a personal interview with each candidate in which he can acknowledge the young person's participation in the process and share thoughts on ways he/she might participate in the life of the parish after the reception of Confirmation.

## Recommended Resources

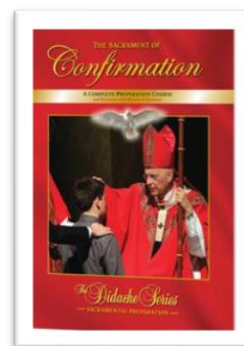
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As long as you ensure that the topics (Catechetical Content, above) are appropriately covered in your preparation program, you are free to use any catechetical texts that have been approved by the USCCB<sup>14</sup> or our office of Evangelization and Catechesis. If you are looking for suggestions, we would recommend any of the four resources below. For your convenience, we have also chosen the selected lessons which would cover the relevant Confirmation topics!

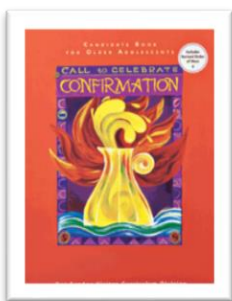
### Book-Only Programs:

#### The Sacrament of Confirmation (The Didache Series)

- -- Retreat experience --
- Introduction: Why Do We Need Confirmation?
- Chapter 1: God Reveals Himself to Man
- Chapter 2: The History of Salvation
- Chapter 3: God Sends his Holy Spirit
- Chapter 11: Life in the Holy Spirit: Witness
- Epilogue: The Sacrament of Confirmation and Living the Christian Life



#### Call to Celebrate Confirmation for Older Adolescents (Our Sunday Visitor)



This book is a Confirmation preparation program designed for ages 15-18 in a convenient 8-session format. Although it isn't organized around the 8-topic recommendation above, we do stand behind this book and recommend it. If you use this book as it is suggested, you can be confident that the topics above are being covered adequately throughout the lessons.

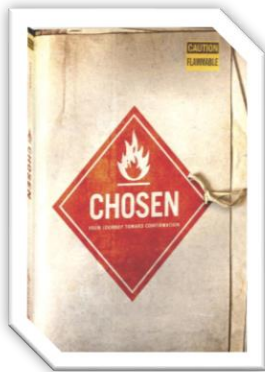
If you use this program, be sure to still include the other required elements of the Confirmation preparation program, including a retreat experience and a discipleship plan.

Note: Our Sunday Visitor also offers a version of this book designed for ages 12-14 which we will be suggesting for use in future years as we move to Confirmation in grades 8, 7, and ultimately 6.

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<sup>14</sup> Search for the USCCB Conformity Listing of Catechetical Texts. This list is updated regularly. As of January 2019, the list can be found here: <http://www.usccb.org/about/evangelization-and-catechesis/subcommittee-on-catechism/upload/Current-Conformity-List.pdf>

## DVD-based Programs:<sup>15</sup>



### **Chosen (Ascension)**

- -- Retreat experience --
- Lesson 14: "Why have I been *Chosen*?"
- Lesson 2: "What makes me happy?"
- Lesson 3: "What's your story, God?"
- Lesson 12: "Who is the Holy Spirit?"
- Lesson 5: "Who is Jesus?"
- Lesson 23: "How do I build the kingdom?"



### **Decision Point (Dynamic Catholic)**

\*each session is made to be a 2-hour presentation – these will have to be adapted

- -- Retreat experience --
- Session 10: Confirmation
- Session 2: What's holding you back?
- Session 8: The Holy Spirit
- Session 3: The Jesus Question
- Session 11: Made for Mission
- Session 10: Confirmation (continued)

## Curriculum Guidelines for Grades 8-10 (outside of Conf. prep)

In planning the year, you will notice that the Confirmation sessions only account for about a third of the religious education year. In the sample parish schedule on page 2, for example, there are still about 10 classes that will need to be planned. For these classes, we ask that you (as you have done in the past) plan your own content for these classes, using USCCB approved texts or materials recommended from our office.

If you are using one of the above texts for Confirmation preparation, you could arrange to use the chapters not covered in Confirmation prep for the remainder of the year. For example, if you are using *Chosen*, you can choose from lessons 1, 4, 6-11, 13, 15-22, and 24 in your other classes.

For other ideas, please contact our office!

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<sup>15</sup> We will **not** be recommending *Chosen* or *Decision Point* in future years for Confirmation preparation. These resources are not designed for 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade students. That being said, *Chosen* and *Decision Point* will still be great resources to use with students in grades 8-12 and might be a great option for parishes looking to use a DVD program for a study group.

## Frequently Asked Questions

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**1. *If Confirmation preparation is only 8 sessions, can a student simply enroll in just that part of the program?***

No. While it is true that the catechetical content for the sacraments of Confirmation takes place during 8 sessions, this is only one part of preparation for Confirmation. An even more essential part of a student's preparation is their regular and active participation in parish life and continued catechesis. Both elements are served in the parish's religious education program. Unless this student and their family are active in the parish in other ways, the norm is for students to participate in the fullness of the religious education program that year. Rather than seek a bare minimum for reception of the sacrament, we hope to instill in parents and their children the desire to be involved in parish life, especially after children have received Confirmation.

**2. *If Confirmation preparation takes place over 8 sessions, what am I supposed to teach for the rest of the year?***

In one sense, Confirmation preparation begins all the way back at Baptism! However, as you point out, the immediate catechetical preparation does take place over 8 sessions, which leaves you with more sessions for you to plan. You can find this covered in more detail above in "Curriculum Guidelines for Grades 8-10."

**3. *What do I do with my 10<sup>th</sup> grade students who have already had a year of Confirmation-specific preparation?***

This question applies to many parishes who chose to leave their programs unchanged for the 2018-2019. These parishes might find themselves with 10<sup>th</sup> grade students who have already had "one year" of preparation (in the old 2-year policy) and 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade students who have had no preparation. First, it is important to note that there should be no perception of injustice here among parents or students. All of these students, regardless of which 'policy' they fall under, would have been expected to be a part of the program the year of their Confirmation and the previous year.

Some parishes will find it appropriate to simply prepare grades 8-10 together as one group. This will take some creativity in making sure to avoid obvious redundancies for the 10<sup>th</sup> grade students while also making sure the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade students don't miss essential information.

Other parishes will find it appropriate to prepare the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade students together, with the 10<sup>th</sup> grade students in their own program. If a parish decides to prepare their 10<sup>th</sup> grade students separately, they should feel free to plan a year that makes sense as a "second year of preparation," rather than feel too strongly encumbered by the new 8-session model.

[see also question #4, below]

**4. *Why does my child have to have two years of preparation while younger students only have to have one? This seems unfair!***

In order to receive Confirmation, the Church asks that candidates first be properly prepared. Just as one shouldn't receive the Holy Eucharist in a state of mortal sin, one should also not receive Confirmation without being properly prepared. In order to prepare students, then, parish Confirmation programs aim to meet certain goals; namely, teaching the faith, growing in holiness, and preparing students to be missionaries and disciples for Christ. (See the Catechism of the Catholic

Church, 1309 and 1319 for more details). Those elements are all a part of the immediate Confirmation preparation. Along with changing the age of Confirmation, our diocese has decided to change that immediate preparation from a 2-year period to a period that takes place within one year. Admittedly, for next year, this does result in a perhaps-awkward situation where two sets of students will be receiving Confirmation next year: those who have had one year of immediate preparation and those who have had two. While this may seem strange, for the sake of our students, we believe this is the best way forward. Since the current 9<sup>th</sup> grade students are already in a program that is *designed* to take place over 2 years, it makes the most sense for them to continue in the fullness of that program. The current 8<sup>th</sup> grade students, however, will be taking part in the new Confirmation program next year. This new program will include all the same elements, but in a way that communicates them over a different period of time. Yes, the immediate preparation period differs in time, but we firmly believe that both groups of students are in the programs that make the most sense to properly prepare them to receive this Sacrament of Confirmation.

Moreover, we hope that *all* our young people, regardless of what age they receive Confirmation, continue to be active members of the parish community, regardless of the length of the Confirmation program! In receiving Confirmation, our youth “are more perfectly bound to the Church” and “more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1285). In other words, receiving this sacrament both strengthens and challenges our young people to become more active in their faith life and their parish community. We hope that our youth who have received Confirmation will continue being a part of the parish community long after they have been Confirmed. As the Confirmation age continues to decrease (it will soon be in 6<sup>th</sup> grade), our parish will be offering different types of faith opportunities to our youth so that they can continue to deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ.

**5. How should I handle preparing 8<sup>th</sup> grade students in my program?**

Each parish will have to decide what model makes the most sense given their audience. Below are a few options:

- One preparation program for grades 8-10
- One preparation program for grades 8-9 (some parishes will not have 10<sup>th</sup> grade students)
- Two preparation programs – one for grades 8-9, one for grade 10
- Two preparation programs – one for grade 8, one for grade 9

**6. How are 8<sup>th</sup> grade students in Catholic school being prepared for Confirmation?**

Catholic schools have been informed of the change in the Confirmation age. The Catholic school religion curriculum will include the catechetical topics necessary for Confirmation. This does not mean that Catholic school students don't need to participate in the parish to receive Confirmation, however. Whether a candidate goes to Catholic school or not, regular Mass attendance and active participation in the parish are essential requirements for Confirmation. Each parish pastor has the authority to decide how his candidates will be best prepared. In other words, a pastor may decide that his parishioners should go to religious education *in addition* to their Catholic school classes. Additionally, certain elements of Confirmation preparation (parent meeting, retreat, rehearsal) are very likely to take part in the parish for both Catholic school students and other students. For this reason, each family will have to ask their pastor how their child should prepare for preparation in their particular parish.

**7. *Given the structure of my program, it makes sense to offer the Sacrament of Confirmation to my 7<sup>th</sup> grade student(s) this year as well. Is that an option?***

In this transition stage, we are trying to ensure that all parishes (as much as possible) are preparing the same age range of children. Generally, we ask that parishes comply with this. (See the chart in “Reference Information” for the graces of Confirmation, by year). While there are situations in which prepared children can receive the Sacrament of Confirmation earlier than the diocesan norms, these are to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

**8. *A child in grade 8-10 has approached the parish for Confirmation preparation this year, but we have never seen him or her at Mass nor at religious education – how should we respond?***

With charity. Every effort should be made by the pastor and/or the PCL to get to know this student, their family, and understand why they have come forward for Confirmation. This family should be welcomed with open arms to the parish. After one has taken the time to understand their situation, the general norms should be followed, as far as is pastorally prudent – namely, that a Confirmation candidate have been active in parish life that year and the year prior. The pastor and/or PCL should accompany them in involving them in parish life so that they can enter the Confirmation program the following year.

**9. *Why have the requirements for community and liturgical hours been removed?***

While we strongly encourage parishes to include community and liturgical service as part of their programs at all grade levels, we have chosen to remove this as a requirement attached to Confirmation. We want to be clear that the Sacrament of Confirmation is a gift, freely given to us by God. Requiring service hours and liturgical hours often causes a shift from “freely receiving” to a focus on counting and tracking these hours, which takes time and effort away from other elements of preparation. There is also a risk, in requiring these hours, that we erroneously communicate (often to parents) the message that “if you tick these boxes, you can earn Confirmation.” Thus, while community and liturgical service are essential aspects of the Christian life, we have decided to remove them as a requirement for Confirmation.

## Reference Information

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### Confirmation Plan (by year)

| Academic Year | Grades Confirmed |
|---------------|------------------|
| 2019-2020     | 8, 9, 10         |
| 2020-2021     | 7, 8             |
| 2021-2022     | 6, 7             |
| 2022-2023...  | 6                |

### Reference and Explanation on Required Elements for Confirmation Preparation

| <i>Element</i>   | <i>Source</i>              | <i>Explanation</i>  |
|--|----------------------------|---|
| <i>Candidate must profess the faith</i>  | CCC 1319<br>Can. 889<br>§2 | To be able to profess the faith, a candidate must have been instructed so that they have knowledge of the faith.<br><br>This is not an expectation that a candidate has mastered all or even many of the elements of our faith. Confirmation is not meant to be an end of catechetical formation. Rather, a candidate must be familiar enough with the faith to confidently profess to be Catholic. It is perfectly appropriate for students to have questions about some aspects of the faith at this stage in their life. |
| <i>Candidate must be in a state of grace</i>   | CCC 1310,<br>1319          | “To receive Confirmation one must be in a state of grace. One should receive the sacrament of Penance in order to be cleansed for the gift of the Holy Spirit. More intense prayer should prepare one to receive the strength and graces of the Holy Spirit with docility and readiness to act.”<br>CCC 1310  |
| <i>Candidate must have the intention of receiving the sacrament</i>  | CCC 1319<br>Can. 889<br>§2 | To have the intention of receiving the sacrament, a candidate must have suitable instruction to be able to have sufficient knowledge of the sacrament.<br><br>Similar to the notes on “professing the faith” above, this does not mean that a candidate must perfectly understand all aspects of the Sacrament of Confirmation. Rather, their knowledge of the sacrament should be enough that they are able to intend to receive it.   |
| <i>Candidate must be prepared to assume the role of disciple and witness to Christ, both within the ecclesial community and in temporal affairs.</i> | CCC 1319                   | To fulfill this element, candidates must first understand what it means to be a disciple and witness to Christ, as well as know how they might be able to carry this out in their state of life.<br>As part of meeting this requirement, each candidate will create a personalized “discipleship plan.”   |
| <i>Retreat experience</i>  | NDC (p. 122)               | A developmentally appropriate retreat experience is to be included as a part of the sacramental preparation.<br>In order to emphasize the unity of the Church and familiarize candidates with our Bishop, we encourage parishes to plan a pilgrimage to the cathedral.  |
| <i>Inclusion of sponsors and parents</i>   | NDC (p. 122)<br>CCC 1311   | It must be ensured that “parents and sponsors are involved in the catechetical preparation of the children for Confirmation.” (NDC p. 122)  |