

# ROADMAP TO SUCCESSFUL CATHOLIC MICROSCHOOLING

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# OVERVIEW

Welcome to the most exciting movement in American education in a generation. Microschools, rooted in relationships and understandings that every leader has of who each child is as an individual, are blooming across the country.

Catholic microschooling is ideal for Catholic parishes looking for ways to serve their congregation in areas where Catholic private schools are not a viable option.

Microschools are creating a transformative shift in teaching and learning. Flexible and adaptable, they meet each child where they are in their learning trajectory. Microschool leaders foster close communities and culture. Catholic microschools allow families access to a high quality Catholic education, personalizing teaching and learning around their needs, and at a fraction of the cost of many conventional choices.

# OBJECTIVE

The National Microschooling Center is an empowering hub for pioneering small learning environments. We are a nonprofit movement builder committed to the healthy growth and evolution of a thriving microschooling movement.

We help individuals and organizations launch microschools. We guide prospective microschools from an idea to launch, helping every step of the way with budgeting, learning choices, understanding families needs and choices and more.



# WHAT IS CATHOLIC MICROSCHOOLING?

*All Catholic schools, including microschoools, must, according to Canon Law, hold the consent of their diocesan Bishop, who maintains the right to watch over and inspect their operations.*

**Catholic microschoooling** can be a form of **partnership microschoooling**. In partnership microschoooling there is a host partner and a technical partner.

Catholic churches can act as a **host partner**. If a Catholic church has available classroom space, they may make space available for microschoools to utilize during the week. If a church has other resources available to share, such as staffing to support nonteaching functions, technology, or recreational space, these can be valuable assets for a microschoool.

They may also choose to work with a **technical partner**, who designs the educational plan and oversees the day-to-day teaching and learning. They can be responsible for tracking academic growth, managing communicating with families, and other important functions. While faith can be incorporated into all subjects, Catholic education may be shared with church leadership and families.

# WHY CATHOLIC MICROSCHOOLING?

**Microschoooling's versatile small learning environments and flexibilities offer an approach particularly well suited to today's Catholic education.**

In communities where traditional Catholic school models are less viable or prohibitively costly, Catholic microschoooling offers operational advantages. Educational advantages of microschoooling can extend to children and families in all environments.

We also believe that there are a variety of benefits available that can be tailored to each unique situation. In the case of Catholic microschoooling, the value added to your community can be immense, everything from a quality education to the children in your congregation to a way for other members to share their talents and give back.

Microschoooling supports the "wide range of life experiences and learning processes," that Pope Francis describes as vital to offer young people. "They need to be taken out of the classroom, their minds need to be taken out of the classroom, their hearts need to be taken out of the classroom," he explained as he described the Church's educational mission in an address to educators in 2015.

***Today's microschoooling models can support each of these to occur with frequency and depth.***

# PRIVATE SCHOOL OR HOMESCHOOL MODEL?

**Microschools often enjoy success either as learning centers supporting families following their state's homeschooling requirements or as private schools.**

The National Microschooling Center can help you understand your state's framework, look at the different paths forward, and navigate these choices alongside your organization.

A homeschool schedule allows flexibility to build around other family needs, so that supporting their children's education can be fully compatible with schedules and requirements families do not control. Travel or other real-world learning opportunities, parents' work obligations, even weather can be met absent the necessary rigidities of running large organizations.

In certain states, the policy framework governing religious-exempt private schools makes microschooling under that private school laws appealing, especially in states with school choice programs. Organizing your microschool as a private school can often help increase parent comfort level and confidence.

Canon Law instructs, "There must be the closest cooperation between parents and teachers.... In fulfilling their task, teachers are to collaborate closely with the parents...."

Microschools, regardless of governance models, are built on relationships and consist of active partnerships between educators and families.

Whether it is a learning center serving homeschooled children or a licensed private school, many families choose microschools because of the collaboration that occurs between educators and parents.



# HOW CAN WE HELP?

We are foundation funded and can help you assess the needs of your particular learners and families as your unpaid consultants. The National Microschooling Center can provide support in determining available assets along with designing an educational program, this includes everything from planning a schedule to selecting learning tools.

## START-UP SUPPORT

Work with our team to make sure you're fully prepared to open your microschool. We can assist with background checks, instructional options, planning initial assessments for learners, understanding data, setting up space, and more.

Curriculum or curricular components, scheduling, faith formation, nonacademic supports, extracurricular and athletic activities are addressed during the planning process.

## LEARNING OPTIONS

Collaborate with our team to gain a better understanding of the various learning options available for your microschool. In addition to our suggestions, we can support you in identifying alternative options and making a selection that tailors to the specific needs of your learners.

## TRAININGS

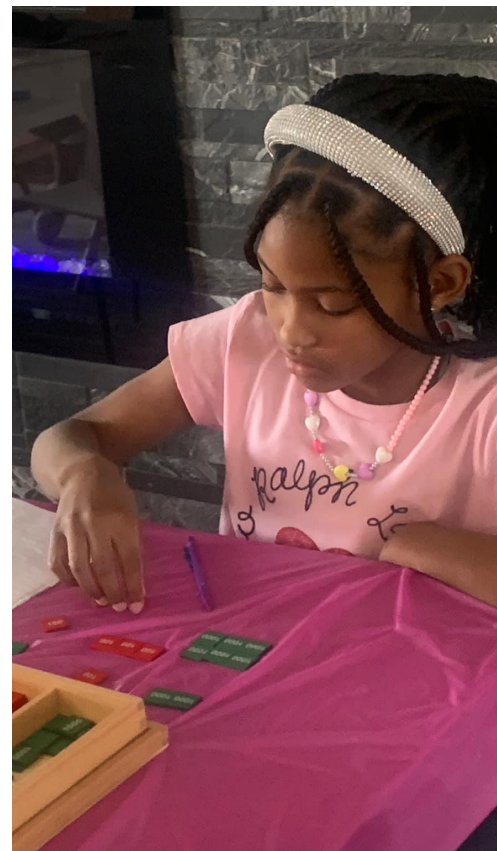
We offer trainings for microschooling leaders covering areas such as operational necessities, smart growth, alternative ways to measure effectiveness, and more.

## LEARNER INTAKE & BASELINE ASSESSMENT HELP

Partner with us to receive as-needed administrative support, including initial learner assessments and mastery-level placement decisions.

## COMMUNITY

Access our community of microschool leaders and families to share ideas and resources. We host in-person and online forums to facilitate the exchange of ideas and best practices, as well as creating a space for community-driven question and answers.



# ROADMAP TO STARTING

1

## **UNDERSTAND THE NEEDS OF YOUR PARISH AND COMMUNITY**

Are your families looking for quality educational options? What ages of children would be served? What are the scheduling needs of your families, are they looking for a full-time solution or part-time flexibility?

2

## **DETERMINE YOUR STAFFING NEEDS**

Think through what your staffing needs might be: will your microschool be small enough that the director can also be the main educator? Do you have volunteers that could be available to help with pick up and drop off? What are your needs if the director/educator is unavailable?

3

## **CONSIDER LICENSING AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS**

It is important that you understand your obligations as they relate to licensing, background checks, and other requirements. We review what you need to know so that you can make an informed decision that is right for you.

4

## **TRAINING THAT WORKS FOR YOU**

The National Microschooling Center has a series of trainings designed with the unique needs of microschooling leaders in mind. These trainings are created to help guide you from pre-launch through growing your microschool.

5

## **SELECT LEARNING TOOLS**

We are constantly studying a variety of world-class learning tools and curricula in order to offer you the best insight possible. We also have access to different licenses for learning tools, allowing you to use these top-of-the-line tools at an affordable price. We can help understand what options might be best for your learners, and if you decide you don't want to use a curriculum or digital learning tools, we are happy to help you think through a solution that works for you and your learners!

6

## **SELECT THE RELIGIOUS COMPONENT THAT WORKS FOR YOU**

Perhaps this is content you already have or you know a great curricula you want to use. If not, we have suggestions that we can connect you with to review what works for you and your families.

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## **OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS**

There will be other aspects to consider such as:

1. How will responsibilities be divided between partners?
2. Are there roles current private schools can play?
3. Are there community partnerships that make sense, or instance, after-school operator?

# LEARNING TOOLS

While your options are vast, the choices below are some of the most popular curricula and learning tools that we have seen microschools thrive with.

A beautiful strength of microschooling is the ability to build a program to meet the academic needs of individual learners, to meet them "where they are." With that in mind, here are some of our favorite tools we are happy to work with you to integrate into your model, along with any others you might be considering:



We can help you select, and change, your learning tools to meet the needs of your specific learners. Contact us today for a more comprehensive selection of options designed to meet the needs of your learners!

# CATHOLIC EDUCATION PROVIDERS

There are a variety of options to consider when determining what the best program is to build out the Catholic component to your microschool. Some of the options include:

## **Working with an affiliated Catholic private school to share resources.**

This works especially well if the Catholic private school does not have a campus in the area the microschool will be located in, or if the campus has a waitlist.

## **Herzog Foundation Toolbox**

This high-quality program helps parents and administrators navigate the Christian school start-up process, contains an 8-step guide to starting a school, which users can immediately access at no cost through the Herzog Foundation.

## **Faith Prep/Faith Academics**

These programs help students pursue academic excellence through an online model that integrates best in class platforms, products and resources

## **Consultant Options**

The diocese might want to consider working with a full-service consultancy to design a replicable program. Should you choose to go that route, you might consider the following, whose work we are familiar and comfortable enough with to recommend an inquiry if you are considering going this route:

## **Open Sky Education/Soaring Educational Services**

Award-winning Christian education consultancy specializing in microschooing, experience includes advisory or back-office services to microschools as well as full-service consultancy.

- Operates the largest voucher network in the nation, the HOPE Christian Schools, with six schools in the greater Milwaukee area.
- Operates a network of charter schools in Arizona, EAGLE College Prep.
- SES currently serves ten external partners (Florida, Illinois, South Dakota, Nevada, California, North Carolina, and Arizona) to assist them in designing and building their schools. Most of them are microschools or hybrid schools.

## **Seton Education Partners**

Operates award-winning Brilla Charter Schools and innovative Catholic education models. Over the past decade their schools have demonstrated success in urban, suburban and rural leaning environments.



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## 1 DOES MY STAFF NEED TEACHING EXPERIENCE?

They do not need to be licensed teachers, or have teaching experience, in order to teach at or lead a microschool, but it can help. Your microschooling team can be created utilizing current staff that we can train, as well as adding additional staff members. If you are looking for individuals with teaching experience, we can help you find the right people.

## 2 WHAT SPACE WORKS FOR A MICROSCHOOL?

You are not limited to traditional classroom space. A church with empty rooms during the week can be an ideal facility space. Consider what materials will be needed for the microschool day. Will these materials need to be removed at the end of each day? Perhaps the end of each week? Can there be a clear delineation of space?

## 3 DO MICROSCHOOLS NEED TO STICK TO THEIR STATE'S ACADEMIC CONTENT STANDARDS?

Academic content standards are approved by each state for their public schools. If microschools are serving homeschool children, their curricular choices are up to them, and can be chosen to best meet the needs of the particular learners served. In some states, homeschool families are required to ensure certain subjects are taught, along with adhering to certain requirements for assessing children.

## 4 HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

Depending on the format and services provided by you to your learners, the cost will vary. If you already have the facilities and technology, the main cost will be your teaching staff. You can determine if this is a cost you can cover, or if you need to pass this cost on to your families by charging a fee to attend.

# CONTACT US

## ARE YOU READY TO GET STARTED?

If you have any questions, concerns, or if you would like to learn more, please reach out!



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