

# ROADMAP TO SUCCESSFUL CATHOLIC MICROSCHOOLING

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# OVERVIEW

Welcome to the most exciting movement in American education in a generation. Across the country, microschools are taking root. Small by design. Relationship-based. Built on a deep understanding of who each learner is and what they need to thrive.

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

# OBJECTIVE

The National Microschooling Center is a home base for bold, community-rooted learning. We serve as a visible, steady force for microschool leaders, families, policymakers, and partners who are building a solution for their community and need guidance that holds up in the real world.

The microschools we support are designed for quality, equity, and impact. We encourage founders to build models that are inclusive, responsive to community needs, and grounded in meaningful measures of success. From first conversations to long-term sustainability, we walk alongside you at every stage, helping you grow into your full potential.



# WHAT IS CATHOLIC MICROSCHOOLING?

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

**Catholic microschooling** can be a form of **partnership microschooling**. In partnership microschooling 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 microschools 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 microschool.

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.

Catholic microschools can also be **independent microschools**, operating as an individual or organization solely responsible for creating the microschool

There are also Catholic **provider network microschools** that can work with individuals to launch Catholic microschools under their umbrella.

# WHY CATHOLIC MICROSCHOOLING?

**Microschooling'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 microschooling offers operational advantages.

We also believe that there are a variety of benefits available that can be tailored to each unique situation. In the case of Catholic microschooling, 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.

Microschooling 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 microschooling 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. We can help you determine if school choice funds are available in your state and how your microschool might be eligible.**

The National Microschooling Center can help you understand your state's frameworks, 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?

The National Microschooling Center works alongside partners as a trusted guide. We help you assess the needs of your learners and families, clarify goals, and think strategically.

Through our national work, partners also gain access to meaningful cost-saving benefits. Because the Center evaluates, compares, and purchases tools at scale, we are able to unlock discounted access to high-quality curricula and learning resources. Those savings are passed directly to microschools, helping keep programs accessible without compromising quality.

## START-UP SUPPORT

Work with our team to get launch-ready without the guesswork. We help you think through instructional options, plan initial learner assessments, understand and use data, and set up learning spaces where children can thrive. You'll also have access to practical tools like budget samples, handbook guidance, and operational templates that take the pressure off building from scratch.

Curriculum choices or components, scheduling, faith formation, nonacademic supports, and extracurricular or athletic offerings are all intentionally addressed during the planning process, so nothing important gets left to chance.

## 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.

## CATHOLIC LEARNING

While many Catholic microschool leaders we have worked with have a sense for the ways they want to teach Catholicism, the Center is happy to help in this area and make suggestions if that is useful to you.

## TRAININGS

We offer trainings for microschooling leaders covering areas such as operational necessities, smart growth, alternative ways to measure effectiveness, and more. Plus, access our office hours designed to answer your questions.

## 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

## UNDERSTANDING REQUIREMENTS

Essential first steps include understanding your state's rules and requirements for nontraditional schooling options, to make sure what you are building will comply. We can help you review what you need to know so you can make informed decisions that are 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 EDUCATION THAT WORKS FOR YOU

Your choice for Catholic educational materials and curricula matters a great deal. We have suggestions that we can connect you with to review what works for you and your families.

7

## OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

There will be other aspects to consider such as:

1. What is your relationship with your diocese and how will that guide your planning?
2. What resources do you have access to?
3. Are there community partnerships that make sense, for 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:

**Lexia**<sup>®</sup>



**CATHOLIC  
VIRTUAL™**



**zEARN**

 **i-Ready**



**CATHOLIC  
TEACHER RESOURCES**

**Beast  
ACADEMY**

**IXL**

rock by rock 

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:

## **Catholic Provider Networks**

There are several Catholic provider networks available to microschools looking to launch under the umbrella of a network. The Center is happy to help you consider your options and connect you with the right path.

## **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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