

Chapter XII

Home-School Relations

1. Upholding what the Pharr Oratory of St. Philip Neri School System Represents

Parents have the primary responsibility for the education of their offspring, a duty that bears with it the authority to choose just how their children should be educated. Most parents, however, do not consider themselves competent to participate directly in the formal schooling of their children or, even if they do think they are capable, they find themselves most often with neither the time nor the means to do an adequate job. They, therefore, must find an institution of learning that best represents their philosophy and religious beliefs.

Parents who choose the Pharr Oratory of St. Philip Neri School System know clearly from the outset not only what their school represents but what the Pharr Oratory of St. Philip Neri School System expects of their children, for the Pharr Oratory of St. Philip Neri School System philosophy, rationale and regulations are meticulously presented in its parent/student handbook entitled *The Pharr Oratory of St. Philip Neri School System: Fundamenta, Ratio et Instituta*. Therefore, it is taken for granted that the Pharr Oratory of St. Philip Neri School System parents will uphold--or at least not serve as an obstacle to--the school's principles, the values, the rules, guidelines, etc.

2. Communication and Cooperation

Except for the personal interest and hard work of the student himself, nothing delights the Pharr Oratory of St. Philip Neri School System priests, Director, staff and teachers more than the personal concern, effort and contact made by the parents of the student, for the Pharr Oratory of St. Philip Neri School System family is aware that its effectiveness as a teaching institution depends, to a great degree, on how well a student's parents communicate and cooperate with the school, and conversely. For this reason, the Pharr Oratory of St. Philip Neri School System strives to make communication between school and home as effortless as possible. To promote this communication and cooperation, the Pharr Oratory of St. Philip Neri School System welcomes parents

2.1 to have conferences with

- the student's teacher,
- the Assistant Director,
- school counselor,
- a priest of the Oratory,
- the Pharr Oratory of St. Philip Neri School System Director, or, finally,
- the Rector;

2.2 to be present at the Pharr Oratory of St. Philip Neri School System "Meet the teacher"

2.3 to be updated by reading the Pharr Oratory Of St. Philip Neri School System bulletin;

- 2.4** to be a Pharr Oratory of St. Philip Neri School System volunteer,
- 2.5** to help the school through fund-raising, and finally,
- 2.6** to pray with their children in the Pharr Oratory of St. Philip Neri School System
- 2.6.1** at Masses, Reconciliation and other liturgical acts,
 - 2.6.2** at popular devotions, e.g., Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, Stations of the Cross, Rosary, etc.;
 - 2.6.3** on feasts and celebrations, e.g., Catholic Education Week, Novena of St. Philip Neri, etc.; and
 - 2.6.4** during retreats or partial days of recollection, etc.
- 2.7** to visit the school's website often to keep abreast of all school information. We encourage parents to stay informed. www.oratoryschools.org

3. Conferences

3.1 Parent-Teacher

Parent-Teacher conferences are initiated in the following ways: (a) parents may communicate with the school office in person or by telephone, requesting a conference with a given teacher; (b) parents may communicate with a given teacher by means of a note carried to school by the student or (c) parents may communicate with a given teacher by email.

3.2 Parent-Director

Parents can request a conference with the Director (a) by communicating with the Pharr Oratory of St. Philip Neri School System offices personally or by telephone or (b) by a letter written to the Director. The Director's secretary will confirm the time, date and place of the conference by means of a telephone call, note, or letter. If the reason for the conference has to do with a teacher and if the question is not of a very serious nature, the Director, following the norms of common courtesy and civility, will ask the parent(s) to meet first with the teacher in an attempt to resolve the problem. If the problem remains unresolved, parents may then request a conference with the Director, his assistants or the Rector.

3.3 Parent-Rector-Priests

Since the Pharr Oratory of St. Philip Neri School System is established under the auspices of the Pharr Congregation of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri of Pontifical Right, parents have access to the priests of the Congregation not only for school-related conferences but also for personal and family counseling and, of course, for spiritual direction.

Parents may make arrangements for such conferences (a) through the campus office, in which case the Pharr Oratory of St. Philip Neri School System, corporative

office staff will confirm the day, time and place of the appointment; or (b) through the parish office of the Church of St. Jude Thaddeus, in which case the parish office staff will take charge of confirming the details of day, time and place.

4. Parental Cooperation

4.1 Interference in the teaching-learning process: Parental cooperation is essential not only to the scholastic but also to the general well-being of the student. If, in the opinion of the Pharr Oratory of St. Philip Neri School System, parental behavior seriously interferes with the teaching-learning process, and after conflict resolutions have been tried and failed, the Pharr Oratory of St. Philip Neri School System may require the parents in question to withdraw their child and sever relations with the school.

4.2 Catholic Education Requires Sacrifice: Catholic education is costly. It requires sacrifice not only on the part of parents who willingly pay extra so that their children will be guaranteed a good education but also on the part of the priests and brothers of Congregation of Oratory of St. Philip Neri, the teachers, the staff, the founding members, benefactors, etc., who have worked so hard to make the Oratory Schools the celebrated center of learning that it has come to be.

4.2.1 New materials and equipment. --Since the Pharr Oratory Of St. Philip Neri School System are not financed by federal, state or diocesan funds, it falls upon the Pharr Oratory of St. Philip Neri School System families themselves to collect extra monies to pay for the school's ever-growing school needs, e.g., computers, software, sports equipment, etc. Because of the hard work and generosity of parents past and present, the name Oratory has come to be synonymous with quality education.

4.2.2 Scholarships. --The Pharr Oratory Of St. Philip Neri School System and its parents are aware that many families cannot afford private education for their children, in gratefulness that God has blessed them with such means, have, with a deep sense of Christian responsibility, worked to provide scholarships for deserving children of economically less fortunate families.

4.2.3 Parent organizers. --Parents with a big heart and leadership skills are asked to organize fund-raising projects. Once a fund-raising committee has been organized, it is just a matter of time before other generous and loving parents follow suit and work to bring in the funds necessary to maintain the first-rate education, which not only their children enjoy, but also, through the scholarship fund, the children of financially limited families. Fund-raising projects are as varied as the imagination of the hard-working parents who create and initiate them, e.g., dances, raffles, lunches, walk-a-thons, flower sales, book fairs, etc.

5. Volunteers for the School Day

Volunteers have historically been an important component of the Catholic school community. In keeping with this tradition, the Pharr Oratory Of St. Philip Neri School System welcomes qualified people from the Pharr Oratory of St. Philip Neri School System family and from the community at large to contribute their time and talent in the education of the future world leaders.

Because, first of all, goodwill alone is insufficient to do the volunteer work needed and, second, because the school exists in a litigious society, the administration, to protect both student and the Pharr Oratory of St. Philip Neri School System must, in conscience, be pleasantly inviting, on the one hand, and prudently cautious, on the other, in its selection of volunteers. With this in mind, the Pharr Oratory of St. Philip Neri School System has established these guideline for the acceptance of volunteer help:

5.1 the volunteer must provide two references stating that he/she is competent as a volunteer;

5.2 the Pharr Oratory Of St. Philip Neri School System will do a thorough check of the references provided;

5.3 the volunteer (parent or outsider) complete a *criminal background check* to obtain criminal history information from the Department of Public Safety, the Department of Criminal Justice, the Federal Bureau of Investigation: Identification Division, or any other law enforcement agency;

5.4 The volunteer must undergo in-service training for the services to be rendered;

5.5 The parent volunteer must sign a *Volunteer Agreement*, which states that all information about students, and their parents will be kept confidential.

In keeping with the law and the Gospel, the Pharr Oratory of St. Philip Neri School System will treat volunteers as valued community members, who, like teachers and students, are required to maintain high standards in both conduct and attire.

6. Student Records

A parent may review their child's student record file provided that the request is made in writing and with at least twenty-four hours of advance notice.

7. Security

To enter the Pharr Oratory of St. Philip Neri School System campuses, you must report to the office and provide the following information:

- full name
- student's name and grade, if applicable
- reason for visit.

No parents may interrupt a class in progress.

8. Personal Visits

A parent, or anyone with sufficient reason to visit, will have to:

- go to the campus office,
- identify themselves to the secretary,
- express exactly what they would like to see, and
- wait to be escorted to their destination.

The visitation will be limited to one class period of no more than thirty (30') minutes.

Student visits: Prior arrangements with the office must be made for student visitors who would like to spend the day at school. A complete emergency form is required for the visit

9. Spiritual Life

9.1 Christian Growth

For Christians, a sound spiritual life depends on authentic communication with God and cooperation with His grace. For a catholic this means, fundamentally, frequent use of the sacraments of confession and communion along with a generally healthy prayer life. The Pharr Oratory of St. Philip Neri School System offers students, staff and parents alike many opportunities for such spiritual growth.

9.2 Means for Spiritual Development

Apart from the spiritual direction offered by the Fathers of the Oratory, the Pharr Oratory of St. Philip Neri School System has available weekly and holy day Mass, Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament, Confession, Stations of the Cross and other popular devotions, special retreats, spiritual conferences, etc.

9.3 The Oratory

An "Oratory" is a place set aside for prayer. Hence, Oratorians is the name given to laymen who are interested in coming together, under the spiritual direction of the priests of the Oratory, to pray, thereby, becoming more mature Christians and more informed in the teaching of the Church. St. Philip Neri, their founder, wanted the members, filled with the love of God, to become leaders. To prepare them for this role, they assemble each week to pray, to read the Bible and the lives of the saints, to learn the teachings of the Church, and to discuss how important social and political issues of the day influence one's Christian life, etc.

10. Channels of Communication through Digital Technologies

Digital technologies are heavily implicated in policies that seek to connect home and school and raise parental engagement. Whether inside or outside the classroom, online access to schedules, grades, homework, and attendance information makes it easy for parents and teachers to stay in close contact with student progress. The Pharr Oratory of St. Philip Neri School System provides an on-line database (SIS) "Student Information System" PowerSchool in which a parent can access their child's accounts 24 hours a day to view their grades and check their progress. Parents (Kindergarten – Second) and students (Third – Twelve) are responsible for requesting their ID number and password from the administration in order to access the system.

11. Open Door Policy

The school's administration and faculty feel that close communication with parents is vital to the effective operation of the school. The Pharr Oratory of St. Philip Neri School System maintains an Open Door policy with regard to communications. This policy provides a means by which an individual may channel concerns or questions about any aspect of our educational program.

"Door 1": Staff Member

Initial contact is made with the teacher. A parent-teacher conference can be arranged by phoning the appropriate school office receptionist. You can also email your child's teacher.

"Door 2": School Administrator

Parents should contact an administrator for concerns not resolved with the teacher, or concerns which should be brought directly to the administration.

"Door 3": Director

If the parents continue to have a concern or question, they may approach the Director by contacting his/her secretary.