



Diocese of Little Rock Office of Catholic Schools

Policies and Procedures Manual

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4.01 NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

The Catholic schools in the Diocese of Little Rock admit students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. The Catholic schools in the Diocese of Little Rock do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

While the school does not discriminate against students with special needs, a full range of services may not be available to them. Decisions concerning the admission and continued enrollment of a student in the school are based upon the student's emotional, academic, and physical abilities, and the resources available to the school in meeting the student's needs.

4.02 ADMISSIONS

Enrollment in a Catholic school is a privilege and every Catholic child has a right to religious instruction and formation in the Catholic faith. No child of a parishioner will be denied the opportunity to attend his/her parish school due solely to the inability to pay full tuition. Students of other faiths are welcome upon space availability. The schools should have a policy for admissions.

4.03 ADMISSION PRIORITIES FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

1. Catholic families in the parish
2. Catholic families in neighboring parishes
3. Other families

4.04 DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED FOR ADMISSION

- Birth certificate
- Baptismal certificate (if Catholic)
- Immunization records
- Any previous schooling documentation, which will be reviewed prior to admittance

4.05 ENTRANCE AGE FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Entrance Age - No child will be admitted to kindergarten unless he/she has attained the age of five (5) years on or before September 1 of such school year. No child will be admitted to first grade unless he/she has attained the age of six (6) years on or before September 1 of such school year.

4.06 SECONDARY SCHOOLS ADMISSION

Students desiring to enter Catholic high schools are to abide by the admissions policies of those schools.

4.07 FOREIGN EXCHANGE STUDENTS

Foreign exchange students are required an international student exchange visitor placement organization to comply with the rules and regulations outlined when placing a student in a school in the state. (Ark. Code Ann. §6-18-1705, §6-18-1704, §6-18-1706)

4.08 PREREQUISITES TO HOME SCHOOLING

Parent(s) and/or guardian(s) desiring to provide a home school for their children must give written notice to the superintendent of the local public school district of their intent to provide a home school for their children and sign a waiver acknowledging that the State of Arkansas is not liable for the education of their children during the time that the parent(s) and/or guardian(s) choose to home school. (Ark. Code Ann. §6-15-503)

4.09 ATTENDANCE

Every parent(s) and/or guardian(s) or other person residing in the State of Arkansas and having the custody or charge of any child or children between the ages of five (5) through seventeen (17) (both inclusive) will send such children to a public, private, or parochial school, or home school. (Ark. Code Ann. § 6-18-207)

In cases of excessive absences, the principal will confer with the parent(s) and/or guardian(s). Generally, a student who has accumulated twenty-five (25) days of absences during the school year will be required to attend summer school to make up the work missed or to repeat the grade.

4.10 TARDINESS

For students to make satisfactory progress in school, it is necessary that they be present on a daily basis when classes begin. A student is considered tardy if not in the classroom when the class bell rings. Tardiness interferes with progress in school and constitutes a disturbance for all members of the class. If a student is late repeatedly, the principal will confer with the parent(s) and/or guardian(s) in an effort to correct this irregularity. If tardiness continues after the conference with parent(s) and/or guardian(s), the student is liable for suspension or expulsion.

4.11 OPPORTUNITIES FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Opportunities will be provided to enable the students' faith to become living, conscious, and active through instruction. The faculty will work together to provide a religion program for the students that will become a powerful force for the development of personal sanctity and for the building of community.

- Every student enrolled in a Catholic school in the Diocese of Little Rock will have the benefit of a religion course taught by a practicing Catholic teacher who holds or is working toward a Diocesan Catechist Certificate.
- All Religion texts and materials must be approved by USCCB.

- Students will be given the opportunity to attend Mass throughout the school year and for the reception of the sacrament of reconciliation.

4.12 GRADING/REPORTING OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Uniformity of grading will be conscientiously maintained throughout the school. That is, work of similar quality will receive about the same grade from all teachers. Academic marks are to be based on an academic achievement and not on conduct, as behavior is to be graded separately.

4.12.1 Grading

The letter system or percentage system will be used for reports to parent(s) and/or guardian(s), while either percentages or letters will be used for permanent record files. In either case, the following interpretation will be maintained in the elementary schools:

A Superior	90 to 100%
B Above Average	80 to 89%
C Average	70 to 79%
D Passing	60 to 69%
F Failure	Below 60%

4.12.2 Modified Grading

A modified grading scale may be used in academic areas affected by the student's diagnosed learning disability or other diagnosed handicapping condition. On the permanent report card, an asterisk will be placed beside the modified subject area. The description of the subject modification(s) will be placed in the student's file. Letter grades given in the modified area(s) will be based on the academic performance as defined in the student's modified academic plan.

4.12.3 Diagnosed Disability

A diagnosed disability is a condition that has been evaluated by a psychiatrist, psychologist, psychological examiner, or physician and determined as severe enough to prevent a child from learning through traditional classroom instruction. Copies of test results and suggestions for educational modifications and/or an academic plan must be filed in the school office.

4.12.4 Report Cards

Report cards will be distributed one week after the close of each quarter.

4.12.5 Failure

When failure seems unavoidable, parent(s) and/or guardian(s) will be properly notified well in advance of the probable failure of the child. Two subject failures in the elementary schools constitute a grade failure unless they are made up during summer classes approved by the principal. Proof of attendance at summer school and passing grades will be presented to the principal before the child is promoted. High schools will follow their own policies regarding student failure. In the event of retention, documentation will be recorded on the permanent record of the student.

4.12.6 Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences will be scheduled at least once a semester.

4.12.7 Promotion

A student is promoted each year on the recommendation of the teacher and the principal. When making an evaluation of the student's academic progress, the teacher in consultation with the principal will consider the social, emotional, physical, and moral development of the student, which at times will be given preference over academic performance.

4.13 PERMANENT RECORDS

A permanent record will be kept for each student. The permanent record will include the attendance, cumulative academic grades, and results from the annual standardized test for the student.

4.14 ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GRADUATION

Graduation exercises will be held in a simple but dignified program in church or in the parish or school hall.

- The use of rings or caps and gowns is not in keeping with the simplicity requirement for elementary graduation.
- Special ceremonies will not be conducted for kindergartens because according to state law, kindergarten is considered part of the elementary school.

4.15 HOME-STUDY ASSIGNMENTS

Student home-study assignments create opportunities for important interactions among schools, families, students, and other adults who help care for children. Well-designed practice helps students learn. Homework guidelines should be developed based on age- appropriate developmental stages of the child.

4.16 DISTANCE LEARNING

Students enrolled in private schools are allowed to participate in distance learning courses provided that conditions for participation are met. (Ark. Code Ann. § 6-47-404 and 6-47-405)

4.17 ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAM

Any student age 16 or 17 that desires to enroll in the adult education program must follow the state guidelines. (Ark. Code Ann. §6-18-201)

4.18 DUAL ENROLLMENT

Qualified students may be enrolled in an institution of higher education as a part-time student

upon receipt of a recommendation from the high school principal and by meeting the criteria for advanced placement. (Ark. Code Ann. 6-60-202)

4.19 INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE

International Baccalaureate courses that are offered in the high schools are to be treated the same as an advanced placement course. (Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-902, Act 2152)

4.20 ARKANSAS ACADEMIC CHALLENGE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Students in private schools in Arkansas that meet the requirements outlined in the Arkansas Code of 1987 may receive scholarship money to be used in participating Arkansas schools of higher education. (Ark. Code Ann. § 6-85-206, 6-85-207, 6-85-208, 6-85-209, and 6-85-210)

4.21 TESTING AND EVALUATION

Students in the elementary schools are given standardized tests, as directed by the Office of Catholic Schools. The results will be included in the student's permanent record.

Children attending private schools may voluntarily submit to tests and evaluations for suspected disabilities and assessments for individual education plans. (Ark. Code Ann. § 6-41-219)

4.22 INTERNET, ELECTRONIC MAIL, AND SOCIAL NETWORKING

All students and parent(s) and/or guardian(s) must read and sign that they agree to comply with stated rules regarding communication and usage of computers and social media while honoring all relevant laws and procedures as outlined by the Diocese of Little Rock.

4.23 SUPERVISION OF STUDENTS

Principals are to make provisions for adequate supervision of students on playgrounds, in cafeterias, in libraries, in church, and at all places where scheduled activities take place.

4.24 CONDUCT AND DISCIPLINE

Since a Catholic school student represents the school at all times, both on and off the school campus, it should be understood that any conduct which brings discredit to the student or to the reputation of the school and its community may result in disciplinary action by the school, including expulsion.

Good order by students is expected in every school. Rules and expectations, together with the consequences for infractions, are to be established by the local administration and published in the school's student handbook. The following regulations are to be met in the formulation of such policies:

- Good classroom discipline is first and foremost the responsibility of the classroom teacher.

- Corporal punishment is contrary to Diocesan policy and is not to be used as a means of student control. All individuals should be treated with dignity and respect.
- Emphasis is placed on positive values rather than negative. When violations do occur, each case will be dealt with patiently, with respect to the personal dignity of the student, the teacher, and all who have been offended by the student's misconduct.
- Means of coping with problem situations are to deny privileges to misbehaving students, to talk to the student in private, to inform parent(s) and/or guardian(s), and/or to seek positive help for the student from the counselor.
- Serious or continuous disciplinary problems will be referred to the principal and parent(s) and/or guardian(s) will be notified of the infractions and of the disciplinary action taken.
- If a student cannot be helped through any of the above means, the principal will follow the procedure for suspension or expulsion as outlined in the policy.

4.25 CONDUCT NOT TOLERATED

Conduct that is not tolerated and that could result in suspension and/or expulsion includes the following but is not limited to:

- Threats and/or acts of violence
- Bullying/harassment including through technology in the school or school- related activities
- Possession of a weapon(s)
- Possession, use, or distribution of drugs or alcohol
- Involvement in or possession of occult or satanic games, cards, or other paraphernalia
- Any disorderly conduct or destruction of property; students will pay for any damage to school or parish property
- Disrespect or abuse of school staff or students
- Theft

4.26 THREATS AND/OR ACTS OF VIOLENCE

Any threat by students to inflict harm to themselves or others must be taken seriously and addressed immediately.

- Whoever hears a threat should report it immediately to the principal.
- The parent(s) and/or guardian(s) of the student who has made the threat should be notified.
- The principal and/or pastor will decide if any proper authorities need to be notified.
- Any parent(s) and/or guardian(s) of a student who has been threatened either verbally or in writing as a potential victim shall be notified.

The student victimizer may be placed on intervention suspension or immediate expulsion. If the student is placed on a suspension, the student must see a mental health professional who is a psychiatrist/psychologist. An evaluation report must be provided with recommendations before the student may return to school.

Any threats made by the parent(s) and/or guardian(s) of a student will result in that family's registration at the school being made probationary for the remainder of the school year or the following school year.

If an adult threatens the safety of the principal or any other member of the school staff, the principal or threatened member of the school staff may take legal action by calling the police or seeking a restraining order.

If the student threatens or commits an act of violence, he/she will immediately be suspended with possible expulsion to follow. In the case of expulsion, the student's permanent record will reflect the expulsion.

4.27 BULLYING

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior among school-aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. The principal should be notified immediately and the student will be disciplined with a possible suspension or expulsion.

4.28 HARASSMENT

Harassment is verbal or physical conduct toward an individual because of his or her race, color, religion, creed, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry, age, disability, marital status, political ideology, or that of his/her relatives, friends, or associates. The principal should be notified immediately and the student will be disciplined with a possible suspension or expulsion.

4.29 POSSESSION OF A WEAPON

The Catholic schools of Arkansas have a no-tolerance policy involving possession of weapon(s). If a student brings a weapon to school or to a school function, or has a weapon on his/her person, the school will immediately suspend and possibly expel the student.

Any object used to intimidate, threaten, or cause bodily harm must be considered a weapon. If the principal determines that a weapon falls into the category of dangerous weapons that require expulsion, he/she shall promptly notify law enforcement and the student's parent(s) and/or guardian(s) regarding any allegation or indication of such a violation.

In the case of expulsion, it will be noted in the student's permanent record that he/she was expelled for possession of a weapon.

4.30 ALCOHOL/DRUGS

The possession, use, or distribution of illegal drugs or alcoholic beverages is not permitted in the school, on the school grounds, or at any student function.

- If any student brings to school or has in his/her possession any drug or alcohol during school hours or at any school function, regardless of time or place, he/she

is liable for suspension and/or expulsion. (Ark. Code Ann. §6-21-608)

- Return to school will be contingent upon the student being actively involved in professional counseling and/or therapy if chemical dependency is evident.
- A second offense will result in automatic expulsion.
- When a student is involved in the distribution of alcohol/drugs to other students, which is a felony in the State of Arkansas, he/she will automatically be expelled from school and the appropriate authorities will be contacted.

4.31 SUSPENSION

Suspension is defined as a temporary exclusion of a student from a school for disciplinary reasons. Suspension from the school will be the decision of the principal in consultation with the pastor. The principal will notify the student and the student's parent(s) and/or guardian(s) for the reason of the suspension, the time of the suspension, and the requirements for reinstatement. It is the discretion of the principal regarding how school assignments are handled during a suspension. Students may be suspended by the principal for serious reasons for a period of time not to exceed ten (10) days.

There are two types of suspension:

- In-school suspension
The student is temporarily removed from the class but remains in school under supervision.
- Out-of-school suspension
The student is not permitted to be on school property for the duration of the suspension.

4.32 EXPULSION

Expulsion is defined as the permanent dismissal of a student from school. Expulsion from school will be the decision of the principal in consultation with the pastor and superintendent. A written report containing reasons for the expulsion will be sent to the student's parent(s) and/or guardian(s) and to the Diocesan superintendent. If parent(s) and/or guardian(s) wish to appeal the decision, they will contact the principal in writing within ten (10) days of receiving notification of expulsion. The principal and pastor will arrange a hearing with a review committee.

4.33 SEARCH OF PROPERTIES

All property on the school campus, including but not limited to lockers, backpacks, purses, and technology devices, together with their contents, may be searched by authorized school personnel. Such action may also be taken when the principal has reason to believe that they contain certain illegal or forbidden substances or other items that would be harmful to others in the school community.

4.34 PHOTOGRAPH AND VIDEO CONSENT

For all students under the age of 18, parent(s) and/or guardian(s) are required to sign a consent form allowing photographs and videos of their child to be utilized in Diocesan websites and/or other publications. Photographs and videos of those students, without a consent form, will not be used on the website and in other publications.

4.35 SCHOOL UNIFORMS/DRESS

A sense of Christian modesty will dictate the type of clothing worn by students.

- School uniforms are seen as affirming the schools' missions and objectives.
- Clothing will be appropriate for the academic climate of the school.
- The administration reserves the right to interpret what is appropriate.

4.36 HEALTH

4.36.1 Medication at School

Any student with a medically complex condition must have a medical plan signed by parent(s) and/or guardian(s) and a health care professional on file in the school office. All medication (prescription and nonprescription) must be administered through the school office. Medicine of any kind is not to be provided by the school.

- Any medication given to a student must have a written directive signed by the parent(s) and/or guardian(s). The written directive will include the name of the student, the name of the medicine, the date and the time(s) the medication is to be administered to the student, and the dosage. Each medication should be in a separate labeled container including the student's name and the time the medication should be given.
- Any medication brought to school will be stored in a designated place under control and supervision of appropriate school officials. The person administering the medication will document: the name of the student, the type of medicine, the date, the time it was administered, the dosage given, and who administered the medicine.
- Students may not share medication with other students.
- Prescription medication must be in the original medicine bottle with directions for administering the medication on the bottle.
- Students having the need for use of an EPI-Pen must have written documentation on file in the office from his/her physician stating the necessity for the student to have it with him/her at all times.

4.36.2 Communicable Diseases

Any student having or suspected of having a communicable disease as defined in the Arkansas Department of Health Rules and Regulations Pertaining to Reportable Disease will be excluded from school for the period of time designated in these regulations.

Parent(s) and/or guardian(s) must report any communicable diseases to the principal.

The identity of the infected student, as well as all health and other pertinent records, shall be kept confidential, and the number of people who are aware of the student's condition will be kept at a minimum.

Before returning to school, the student must be past the period of communicability; that is, free of fever, vomiting, and/or diarrhea for 24 hours, and able to participate in normal classroom activities.

4.36.3 Immunizations

All students attending Catholic schools in the Diocese of Little Rock are subject to the immunization laws of the State of Arkansas, which can be found on the Arkansas Health Department website. (Ark. Code Ann. §6-18-702)

- A school may temporarily admit a child provided that the child becomes appropriately immunized, is in-process of receiving the needed doses of vaccine, or shows proof that he/she has applied for an exemption for those vaccines they have not received within thirty (30) calendar days after the child's original admission.
- An exemption to the immunization law may be made only by a certificate issued by the Director of the Arkansas Department of Health.
- All schools will use the Health Appraisal Record as a standard form for recording immunization information. These forms may be obtained through the Office of Catholic Schools.
- An accurate and current list of all exempt and deficient students must be maintained at the school.

4.37 STUDENT ACCIDENTAL INSURANCE

All students will be offered the opportunity to enroll in school accidental insurance. The Office of Catholic Schools will provide the principals with the information of the insurance to be used by the Catholic schools in the Diocese.

4.38 EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

School-sponsored extracurricular activities may be held with the approval of the pastor and/or principal. All school-sponsored activities will be appropriately supervised by VIRTUS trained faculty members and adults.

4.39 DANCES

Dances are not permitted as school-sponsored functions for elementary schools. Parent(s) and/or guardian(s) should be encouraged to sponsor other entertainments and activities for elementary students. Dances sponsored for designated junior high and/or high schools will be closed events that are restricted to students and their guests and follow the school's guidelines for the event.

4.40 PREGNANCY

In keeping with our Catholic philosophy regarding respect for human life, if pregnancy occurs, individuals involved will be treated with dignity, compassion, and concern for his/her feelings.

- The individuals involved are given the option to continue his/her studies in school.
- The students are free to pursue a transfer to another educational facility and make arrangements to receive the credits through the Catholic school.
- In the case of students who are in his/her senior year, if all criteria of academic credits are met, the students may receive a diploma privately outside of the formal commencement ceremony.

4.41 MARRIED STUDENT

Curriculum in a Catholic high school is not designed for the married student. Therefore, married students are not allowed to enroll in a Catholic high school. If students marry before graduation, they are advised to complete graduation requirements through other agencies or institutions.

4.42 HUMAN SEXUALITY

4.42.1 Reasons for a Policy on Human Sexuality

All entities of the Catholic Church are for the purpose of furthering the saving mission of Jesus Christ and must operate in accord with the truth revealed by God in both natural law and divine revelation. In particular, our Catholic schools must remain in the fullness of the truth in order to carry out their proper mission:

Since true education must strive for complete formation of the human person that looks to his or her final end as well as to the common good of societies, children and youth are to be nurtured in such a way that they are able to develop their physical, moral, and intellectual talents harmoniously, acquire a more perfect sense of responsibility and right use of freedom, and are formed to participate actively in social life. (*Code of Canon Law*, c. 795).

These truths extend into every facet of our lives, including—and perhaps especially—our sexuality.

Regarding sexuality and sexual identity, the Catechism of the Catholic Church states: “By creating the human being man and woman, God gives personal dignity equally to the one and the other. Each of them, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his sexual identity.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* (“CCC”), 2360-2363). By its very nature, sexuality is ordered to the conjugal love of a man and woman within the bond of marriage (c. 1055). And marriage, which is a partnership of the whole of life, is always ordered by its very nature to both the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of children (*Ibid.*). All persons are called to chastity, to be lived out according to one’s state in life (CCC, #2337-2359).

These teachings of the Church are not mere antiquated notions. In fact, Pope Francis has repeatedly stressed the importance of a proper understanding of our sexuality, warning of the challenge posed by “the various forms of an ideology of gender that denies the difference and reciprocity in nature of a man and a woman and envisages a society without sexual differences” (*Amoris Laetitia* (“AL”), #56). Pope Francis further notes that “biological sex and the socio-cultural role of sex (gender) can be distinguished but not separated,” and that although we must always be “understanding of human weakness and the complexities of life,” that does not require us to “accept ideologies that attempt to sunder what are inseparable aspects of reality” (*Ibid.*). Ultimately, “[w]e are creatures, and not omnipotent,” and we must accept and respect our humanity “as it was created” (*Ibid.*; see also Gen. 1:27, Matthew 19:4, and Mark 10:6). The Holy Father then stresses that “the young need to be helped to accept their own body as it was created,” so that “we can joyfully accept the specific gifts of another man or woman, the work of God the Creator” (*AL*, #285).

As Pope Francis notes, we must always respect the sacred dignity of each individual person, but that does not mean the Church must accept the confused notions of gender ideology. We must not demean or deny the sincerity and struggle of those who experience same-sex attraction or who feel their true gender identity is different from their biological sex. Rather, we seek to accompany them on their journey of life, offering them the light of the Gospel as they try to find their way forward. These truths are not merely faith-based; rather, such realities are also knowable through the use of properly functioning senses and right reason (Pope St. John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, #22). We do not serve anyone’s greater good by falsifying the truth, for it is only the truth that frees us for the full life that God offers to each of us. Thus, when a person experiences same-sex attraction or some form of gender dysphoria, such struggles do not change the biological fact of how God created that person, and it would be untruthful for the Catholic Church or our Catholic schools to pretend otherwise. The policies of our Catholic schools, therefore, must reflect these fundamental truths.

4.42.2 Bullying/Harrassment/Violence and Human Sexuality

All persons have inherent human dignity and are thus deserving of innate respect as a person. Bullying, harassment, or threats or acts of violence against any student based on that student’s perceived sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity, will not be tolerated (*see above*, sections 4.26, 4.27, and 4.28).

4.42.3 Chastity

All persons are called to chastity in accordance with their state in life. For purposes of the school environment, chastity also encompasses modesty in language, appearance, dress, and behavior. Accordingly, romantic or sexual displays of affection are generally not permitted at school.

4.42.4 Sexual Orientation and Same-Sex Attraction

Students may not advocate, celebrate, or express same-sex attraction in such a way as to cause confusion or distraction in the context of Catholic school classes, activities, or events. When

discussing homosexuality or homosexual inclinations, the use of the term “same-sex attraction” is preferred, as it is a more appropriate description in accordance with the truths of Catholic faith and morals.

4.42.5 Gender Dysphoria (Transgenderism)

All students are expected to conduct themselves at school in a manner consistent with their biological sex. Schools shall consider the gender of all students as being consistent with their biological sex, including, but not limited to, the following: participation in school athletics; school-sponsored dances; dress and uniform policies; the use of changing facilities, showers, locker rooms, and bathrooms (with rare exceptions only on a limited, case-by-case basis, to be determined by the principal of the school); titles, names, and pronouns; and official school documents (*see* section 4.43, Official School Documents). If a student’s expression of gender, sexual identity, or sexuality should cause confusion or disruption at the school, or if it should mislead others, cause scandal, or have the potential for causing scandal, then the matter will first be discussed with the student and his/her parents. If the issue is not resolved to the satisfaction of the school, whose primary goal must always be to uphold Catholic truths and principles, then the student may be dismissed from the school, after the parents are first given the opportunity to withdraw the student from the school.

4.43 OFFICIAL SCHOOL DOCUMENTS

Diplomas, transcripts, school records, and any other official documents of the school (“official school documents”) shall be issued in conformity with the student’s biological sex as based upon physical differences at birth and at the time of the student’s enrollment. Official school documents are also historical documents and, as such, must accurately reflect the name and identity of the alumnus/alumna during the time in which he/she was enrolled at and graduated from the school. If after graduation an alumnus/alumna legally changes his/her name, for whatever reason, and requests new versions of his/her official school documents, the official school documents may be issued in the following format: “Original Name, n.k.a. New Legal Name.”