



PARISH RECORDS RETENTION *Guidelines*



**ARCHDIOCESE
of MILWAUKEE**

Office for Archives and Records Management



RECORDS RETENTION GUIDELINES FOR PARISH & SCHOOL RECORDS

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the *Records Retention Guidelines for Parish and School Records* is to ensure parish records are retained for as long as legally, historically, or operationally necessary, thereby providing a record of what the parish has done to serve the people of the parish and community. A record is defined as all recorded information, regardless of medium or characteristics; as defined a record can be paper, photographs, electronic documents (e-mail, databases, etc.), and audio/visual material.

Canon 535 mandates that each parish is to have a storage area to house sacramental registers and historical documents as a parish archive. The goal of any archive is to collect, preserve, and organize these historical documents. In the event of a parish merger, the new parish assumes responsibility of the records of the former parish(es).

These guidelines were established in consultation of a number of Archdiocesan Offices, including:

[Office for Archives and Records Management](#)

[Parish and School Human Resources](#)

[Parish & School Financial Consulting](#)

[Office of Catechesis](#)

[Office for Schools](#)

Any of these offices would be happy to assist you with any questions, but the Office for Archives and Records Management at www.archmil.org/archives is a good place to start.

HOW TO USE THESE GUIDELINES

The *Records Retention Guidelines for Parish Records* centers around identifying the different types of records that may be found within a parish or school, and providing guidance as to how long that type of record should be retained. Record retention schedules represent the period of time that records must be kept according to legal and/or organizational requirements. The retention periods in this manual are based on Canon Law, state and federal statutes, a determination of historical value, and practical parish realities.

The Records Retention schedule in this guideline are divided into different groups of records: Administrative, Catechetical, Cemetery, Financial & Accounting, Historical Records & Publications, Personnel, Property, Sacramental, and School records.

Within each group there are different record types created in relation to the record group subject. Each record type has its own retention period which states how long each record type needs to be kept. Some records may be destroyed or discarded after a number of years. In this document, **destroy** means to securely and permanently destroy (i.e. shred), and **discard** means to get rid of (i.e. recycle). A few record types need to be kept permanently. Permanent records are to be maintained even after a parish/school merges or closes. In the event of a merger, consult the parish merger manual.

This Records Retention schedule outlines the most common records found at parishes/schools. Your parish/school may or may not have all of the record types outlined in this document. If you have a record that is not on this list please contact the Office for Archives & Records Management for assistance.

ESTABLISHING A PARISH ARCHIVE/RECORDS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

This document does not provide instructions for parishes/schools in establishing a more formal archives and records management program. The Office for Archives and Records Management has published a [basic online tutorial of how to establish a parish archive](#) that endeavors to answer many of the introductory questions a parish/school may have.

Archive and Records Management Programs aim to systematically organize records (regardless of format) from the creation of the record through either preservation or destruction. Archdiocesan archivists are available to assist parishes/schools in establishing an archive by offering advice on filing systems, storage options, and a review of existing records. Please contact the Archives to arrange a free onsite visit to your parish or school.

STORING RECORDS: PERMANENT AND NON-PERMANENT STORAGE

One common issue that many parishes have is that space is a premium. Therefore, it is important that parishes follow the recommended retention periods in this guideline. Discarding records that no longer have value has the potential to open up space and save money on storage costs. It is likewise important to save permanent records in a way that ensures they will be safe into the future. Not every type record needs to be saved the same way.

Perhaps the most important thing to consider is that you know WHERE the records are. Every year we encounter a parish or school who does not know what happened to their old student transcripts or prenuptial files from a parish that has closed. An updated inventory of where records are located can be an extremely useful tool.

Permanent Records

The Archdiocesan Archives put together a tutorial on [The Parish Archive](#), which gives detailed information on records that require permanent storage, such as sacramental records and other historic documents. To summarize, permanent records should be kept in a space that is secure from high fluctuations in temperature and humidity, fire, flood, and theft. Records should be labeled with a brief description and “PERMANENT” on the front of each box.

Non-Permanent Records

Many records – financial records in particular – only need to be kept for a specific length of time. In such instances, we recommend that once the records are no longer administratively needed in an individual’s office, that they be put into a standard banker’s box and labeled with the contents of the box and the year the box can be destroyed. A label can be as simple as this:

<p style="text-align: center;">St. A’s Parish</p> <p>Accounts Payable – Paid Receipts</p> <p>Date Range: RY 2005/2006 Box #: 1 Destroy Date: 7/2014</p>

With this type of system, it is much easier to go through your boxes once a year and destroy those records whose retention is expired.

If possible, a dedicated room for records is recommended, but we realize that may not always be feasible. At a minimum, we suggest avoiding cramming records into old closets in an abandoned building.

ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS

These are records produced in the course of the management of the affairs of the parish/school. For a definition of discard vs. destroy, see page 3.

Administrative Records Retention Schedule		
Record Type	Description	Retention Period
Accident Report	A report documenting an injury of an individual such as a parishioner, volunteer, etc. in which an insurance claim may or may not have been filed. SEE ALSO Personnel Records.	ADULTS: 3 years +1 month, then destroy. CHILDREN: Maintain until the child is age 20 years +1 month, then destroy. Always write down the minor's date of birth on the accident report.
Affiliated Organization records	Meeting minutes, agendas, and publications of organizations and committees affiliated with the parish.	Permanent.
Announcement Books	Brief summaries and announcements of parish activities that may be read to congregations during services.	Permanent.
Annual reports, to Chancery	Status Animarum Reports.	Permanent.
Annual reports, to parish/school	Annual report of statistics, financial, and parish/school activities published for parishioners or student families.	Permanent.
Annual reports, to Safe Environment Office	Reports for the Safe Environment Office diocesan offices regarding compliance at the parish/school, including safe environment curriculum and compliance verification reports.	Permanent.
Articles of Incorporation & By-Laws	Documentation of incorporating or bringing into existence a corporate body of the parish/school.	Permanent.
Census Records	Census of parishioners or Catholics in an area relevant to the parish.	Permanent.
Consecration of Altar/Church	Documentation that a church or altar was consecrated, including any reference to relics.	Permanent.
Contracts, Major	Documentation of contractual relationship between parish/school and an entity. Includes contracts of real estate, employer/employee, and capital improvements.	50 years after cancellation or expiration.

These retentions apply to ALL records, including both paper and electronic.

Administrative Records Retention Schedule (continued)

Record Type	Description	Retention Period
Contracts, Minor	Documentation of contractual relationship between agencies and service providers. Includes contract with description of the services provided, dates of the contract, signatures, and correspondence.	6 years after cancellation or expiration.
Correspondence, Official (includes email)	Policy and program planning, official communication, press releases, official statements, discussions relating to strategic initiatives or mission program activities, etc. May include official correspondence between the parish/school and the Chancery, Archbishop's Office, Safe Environment Office, and/or Schools Office, state and local government officials.	Permanent.
Correspondence, Routine (includes email)	Messages, travel arrangements, meeting appointments, acknowledgements, ordering, transmittals, reminder notices, cover letters, announcements, etc.	Review/Discard annually.
Handbooks	A handbook or similar document created by the parish or parish office that provides participants or parishioners with important information.	Permanent.
Insurance Claims	Records of accident or injury claims.	ADULTS: 3 years +1 month, then destroy. CHILDREN: Maintain until the child is age 20 years +1 month, then destroy. Always write down the minor's date of birth on the accident report.
Legal Opinions		7 years, then destroy.
Liturgical minister schedules	Schedules of altar servers, ushers, lectors, etc.	Retain until superseded.
Mass intention books	Record of monetary offerings received by a priest for the celebration of a Mass for a particular intention of the donor. See also section III of the Clergy Manual.	2 years, then destroy.

These retentions apply to ALL records, including both paper and electronic.

Administrative Records Retention Schedule (continued)		
Record Type	Description	Retention Period
Office files, subject	Records organized in files by subject. Such files may often be working/transitory materials that can be destroyed once their administrative value ceases. However, if the subject matter is substantive, the material should be transferred to parish archives.	Substantive selections permanently retained. All others destroyed once value no longer needed.
Pastoral Council, constitution	Governing documents of the pastoral council.	Retain until superseded.
Pastoral Council, minutes	Meeting minutes and agendas of pastoral council meetings.	Permanent.
Pastoral Council, Committees, minutes.	Meeting minutes and agendas of pastoral council committees.	Permanent
Parish Organization records	Meeting minutes, agendas, and publications of parish organizations and committees.	Permanent.
Parishioner registration cards	Registration cards of parishioners.	Permanent.
Parishioner rosters	A complete listing of parishioners during a given year, such as during a census.	Permanent.
Policy and Procedure Statements	Official policies implemented by the parish/school.	Permanent.
Program Materials	Items such as calendars, flyers, social media posts, etc. documenting events put on by your parish/school.	Some record that the program happened is permanent, but administrative records (such as planning records) may be discarded once no longer needed.
School Board/Committee	Meeting minutes and agendas of the school board or school committee.	Permanent.
Strategic Plans/Task Force Reports	Final version of strategic plans or task force reports for parish/school.	Permanent.
Volunteer Driver Forms	Forms signed by volunteer drivers.	5 years, then discard.

These retentions apply to ALL records, including both paper and electronic.

CATECHETICAL RECORDS

These records are specific to what you may find in a parish’s Catechetical Office, but the office may also need to consult the Administrative Records, Financial and Accounting Records, and Personnel Records Retention Schedules. For a definition of discard vs. destroy, see page 3.

Catechetical Records Retention Schedule		
Record Type	Description	Retention Period
Attendance Records	Class and event attendance sheets.	1 year, then destroy.
Class Lists	Annual class list of students enrolled.	Retain until superseded, then discard.
Custody Documents	Records showing legal custody of a child.	Retain until student is 18 years of age, then destroy.
Athletic records	Rosters, coach forms, etc.	5 years, then discard.
Field Trip/Activity/Sport Permission Forms	Permission forms signed by parents/legal guardians.	5 years, then discard.
Instructional materials and worship aids.	Program materials such as handouts, lesson plans, schedules, and liturgical booklets.	Retain until no longer of administrative value, then discard.
Registration	Registration forms for each student.	5 years after withdrawal from program, then destroy.
Religious Education Certification records	Certificates earned by catechists, teachers, catechetical leaders; documentation of clock hours completed.	Retain most recent certificate permanently, but transfer with employee/volunteer to new parish/school. Retain clock hour documentation until certification earned.
Religious education reports	Reports for the diocesan offices regarding religious education at the parish/school including safe environment curriculum verification reports.	Permanent.
Sacramental Preparation Records	Documentation of sacraments received given to parish to record in sacramental registers.	1 year after recorded in Sacramental Register, then destroy.
Student Records (catechetical students)	Student records such as emergency cards, disciplinary records and accommodation plans.	1 year after student ceases enrollment, then destroy.

These retentions apply to ALL records, including both paper and electronic.

Catechetical Records Retention Schedule (continued)		
Record Type	Description	Retention Period
Tuition or Fee Records	Record of tuition or fees collected.	7 years, then destroy.
Volunteer Information & Rosters	Records documenting catechists, aides, coaches, chaperones in the program.	5 years, then discard.

CEMETERY RECORDS

Records for parish operated cemeteries are the responsibility of the parish. If a parish merges then the care of the cemetery and its records becomes the responsibility of the new parish serving the territory. In some instances a separate organization may take control of the cemetery. If your parish has a cemetery but you do not know where the records are please contact the Archdiocesan Archives.

Cemetery Records Retention Schedule		
Record Type	Description	Retention Period
Account cards**	Record of lot ownership and payments.	Permanent.
Annual report	Annual report documenting finances and events of the year.	Permanent.
Bank records	Cancelled checks and deposit slips written by the parish, along with statements issued by the bank. Information includes checks: date, to whom paid, amount, check number, authorized signature; bank statements: list of checks for one month period, dates, beginning balance, ending balance; and deposit slips: amount of deposits, and total deposit.	7 years, then destroy.
Burial records**	Record of internments name, date of burial, lot number, etc. arranged alphabetically.	Permanent.
Cemetery Board minutes	Meeting minutes of the governing body of the cemetery.	Permanent.
Contracts, lot ownership	Contracts and correspondence documenting lot ownership.	Permanent.
General Ledger	General ledger compiled at end of year showing income and expenses for all accounts.	Permanent.
Lot Maps**	Maps showing the location of each internment.	Permanent.

****Account cards, burial records, and lot maps must have a duplicate record off site from the original record.**

FINANCIAL AND ACCOUNTING RECORDS

Records produced in the course of managing a parish/school's finances. For a definition of discard vs. destroy, see page 3.

Financial & Accounting Records Retention Schedule		
Record Type	Description	Retention Period
Accounts payable	File copies of invoices submitted by various vendors supplying goods and services to parish/school.	7 years, then destroy.
Accounts receivable		7 years, then destroy.
Audit Reports, final	Audited financial statement of the parish/school and related entities.	Permanent.
Audit Reports, working papers	Reviewing and documenting financial information created as part of the annual audit performed by an outside agency.	7 years, then destroy.
Balance Sheets, Annual		Permanent.
Balance Sheets, quarterly/monthly		2 years, then destroy. If no annual balance sheet, then permanent.
Banking Records	Cancelled checks and deposit slips written by the parish/school, along with statements issued by the bank. Information includes checks: date, to whom paid, amount, check number, authorized signature; bank statements: list of checks for one month period, dates, beginning balance, ending balance; and deposit slips: amount of deposits, and total deposit.	7 years, then destroy.
Bingo/Raffle Records	Records relating to funds raised through bingo and raffles. Includes state bingo and raffle licenses.	4 years, then destroy.
Bonds	Statements and other documentation of bonds.	4 years from date of cancellation, then destroy.
Budgets, approved	Approved and revised budget materials.	Permanent.
Budgets, working papers	Working papers and unapproved drafts of budgets.	Retain until administrative value ceases, then destroy.
Cash books and journals		7 years, then destroy.

These retentions apply to ALL records, including both paper and electronic.

Financial & Accounting Records Retention Schedule (continued)		
Record Type	Description	Retention Period
Certificates of Deposit		3 years after redemption, then destroy.
Collection envelopes	Envelopes used for weekly offering. This includes the tamper evident bags that should be reconciled to the collection envelopes.	Current year +1, then destroy.
Collection statements	Annual or quarterly statement of offering issued to donor.	Current year +1, then destroy.
Credit card statements		7 years, then destroy.
Donor Lists		Permanent.
Endowment decrees		Permanent.
Finance Council Meetings	Meeting minutes, agendas, and reports from the parish Finance Council.	Permanent.
Financial Reports, annual	Annual report of parish/school finances. Status of expenditures, information includes account numbers, account names, assets, reserve and fund balances, liabilities, totals, and net worth.	Permanent.
Financial Reports, monthly	Monthly record of parish/school finances.	Current year +1, then destroy.
Financial Statements	Annual financial statement.	Permanent.
General ledgers, annual	General ledger compiled at end of year showing income and expenses for all accounts.	Permanent.
Gifts and Contributions, Permanently Restricted	Documentation related to funds received by gift. This includes documentation from the donor regarding the intended purpose of the funds received.	Permanent.
Gifts and Contributions, Unrestricted	Documentation related to funds received by gift.	7 years, then destroy.
Insurance Certificate of Coverage	Catholic Mutual Insurance Certificate of Coverage.	Permanent.
Insurance Ledger	Catholic Mutual Group ledger pages showing the entities covered by the policy.	Permanent.

These retentions apply to ALL records, including both paper and electronic.

Financial and Accounting Records Retention Schedule (continued)		
Record Type	Description	Retention Period
Invoices and paid bills, major building construction	Documentation of monies paid by parish/school for major building projects that require a proxy from the Chancery office.	Permanent.
Journal entry sheets	Monthly journal work papers.	7 years, then destroy.
Mortgage payments	Documentation of mortgage payments and any documentation that demonstrates satisfaction of mortgage.	Permanent.
Payroll journals	Journal of payroll accounts.	7 years, then destroy.
Payroll registers	Summary schedule of earnings, deductions, and accrued leave.	7 years, then destroy.
Pension records	Documentation of pension eligibility, which may include copies of quarterly reports sent to the Pension Coordinator.	Permanent.
Pledge cards	Pledge cards from donors.	Current year +1, then destroy.
Scrip Records	Documentation of volunteer hours logged, financial records and waivers.	7 years, then destroy.
State Aide Payment Reports	Report of state aide payments made to a school.	Permanent.
Stock and Securities	Statements and other documentation of stocks and securities owned.	5 years after sale, then destroy.
Tax Records	Records documenting employee earnings, income tax withheld, agency filings, and statements of fees paid to independent contractors. Includes: W-2, W-4, 1099 and 1099R forms.	4 years from filing date, then destroy.
Tuition Reports	Tuition reports for a school.	Permanent.

These retentions apply to ALL records, including both paper and electronic.

HISTORICAL RECORDS AND PUBLICATIONS RETENTION SCHEDULE

These records should be kept permanently to document the history of your parish/school and its role in the archdiocese and community.

Historical Records and Publications Retention Schedule		
Record Type	Description	Retention Period
Anniversary Books	Books or publications made in celebration of a parish/school anniversary.	Permanent.
Audio/Visual materials	Videos, movies, recordings that were produced by the parish/school to document parish/school activities and events. These also include any videos made by your parish and posted on your website/YouTube channel.	Permanent.
Bulletins	Weekly bulletins given to parishioners documenting the current activities of the parish. Often bound together by year.	Permanent.
Newsletters	Newsletters created, usually weekly or monthly, by the parish, school, or parish organizations.	Permanent.
Parish/School Related Publications	Publications documenting the history the parish/school, current activities of parish/school role in community. May include books, news articles, magazines, scholarly essays, etc.	Permanent.
Photographs and Scrapbooks	Photographs and scrapbooks, including class photos.	Permanent.
School Yearbooks	Annual publication of school students and activities.	Permanent.

PERSONNEL RECORDS

Records maintained to document the employment of persons at a parish/school. A personnel file should be maintained for each active parish/school employee. That file should contain:

- Code of Ethical Standards for Church Leaders, signed
- Disclaimer and acknowledgement receipt of Handbook
- Employee application
- Job description
- Offer and acceptance letters
- Performance reviews
- Resume
- Salary Information
- Vacation record
- Written warnings

These records are **confidential** and should be made available only to parish representatives with a legitimate right to know, unless their disclosure is compelled by some legal action.

In Wisconsin, employees and former employees have the right to inspect their own personnel files twice per year. The parish/school/employer has the right to require that the request be in writing and has seven working days to comply with the request.

Again, in Wisconsin, several items likely to be in a personnel file are specifically *excluded* from mandatory inspection:

- investigation of criminal offenses
- materials dealing with staff management planning
- personal information concerning another employee that could, if released, be an invasion of privacy
- records relating to a pending legal claim that would be discoverable in court
- reference letters
- test documents

All employee papers must be kept during an employee's employment at the parish/school. The following "Personnel Records Retention Schedule" applies to individuals who are no longer employed by the parish/school.

For a definition of discard vs. destroy, see page 3.

Personnel Records Retention Schedule		
Record Type	Description	Retention Period
Accident/injury reports	Records related to an accident or injury, or other incident involving a staff member that has potential to hold the parish/school criminally or civilly liable.	ADULTS: 3 years +1 month, then destroy. CHILDREN: Maintain until the child is age 20 years +1 month, then destroy. Always write down the minor's date of birth on the accident report.
Applications, not hired	Application and resumes solicited or not solicited by the parish for applicants that were not hired.	1 year, then destroy.
Attendance records	Documentation of employee attendance, vacation time, sick leave, etc.	4 years, then destroy.
Background checks	Documentation of background checks in compliance with Safe Environment. Note, records after 2016 are maintained in the CMG Connect database. Pre-2016 records that have not been entered into CMG Connect are to be maintained at the parish.	Permanent.
Benefits, Beneficiary Designation for Retirement.		7 years after disbursement of funds, then destroy.
Benefits, Enrollment & Changes	Record of elections, changes, and cancellations by employees for type and amount of participation in all benefit plans (COBRA, Flexible Spending Accounts, health, dental, retirement, unemployment worker's compensation, etc.). Also included in this area are: Other short-term records such as change of address forms.	7 years after retirement, resignation or involuntary termination, then destroy.
Credit report	Credit report submitted as part of the application process for employees and/or trustees.	Credit report returned to employee/trustee after review. A note that the credit report was viewed should be placed in employee's shadow file.
Disability records	Records related to long-term disability.	Permanent.
Hazardous exposure records	Records and medical surveillance documenting employee's exposure to hazardous substances.	Duration of employment plus 30 years.

These retentions apply to ALL records, including both paper and electronic.

Personnel Records Retention Schedule (continued)		
Record Type	Description	Retention Period
I-9 Forms	Forms showing an employee's right to work in the United States.	Retain either 1 year after date of termination or 3 years after the date of hire, whichever is later, then destroy. <i>Helpful formula to determine:</i> <i>Date of hire</i> <i>+ 3 years = _____</i> <i>Termination date + 1 year = _____</i> Keep until the later date.
Payroll, W-2, W-4, 1099, 1099R	Records documenting employee earnings, income tax withheld, agency filings, and statements of fees paid to independent contractors.	4 years from the date tax is due or paid, then destroy.
Personnel File, Current Employees	Records concerning current parish/school employees on payroll. File may include correspondence, resumes, evaluations, employee data sheets, job descriptions, job applications, checklists, agreements (handbook acknowledgement, code of conduct), salary summary, payroll deductions (W-4 forms and 403b forms), work permits, annual time reports, written warnings, vacation & sick leave accrual, development plans and documentation of training.	Retain during employment. Transfer to Employee File, Former Employees upon termination of employment.
Personnel File, Current, Shadow/Supervisor File	Records concerning supervision of current parish/school employees. File may include interview notes, reference checks, background checks, garnishments, and supervisor notes.	Retain during employment. Transfer to Employee File, Former Employees upon termination of employment.
Personnel File, Current, Teachers	Records may include those described above in <i>Personnel File, Current Employees & Personnel File, Shadow/Supervisor File</i> , but may also include teaching certificates, transcripts of college credit, and teaching/principal contracts.	Retain during employment. Transfer to Employee File, Former Employees upon termination of employment.
Personnel File, Former Employees	Records concerning personnel files of former parish/school employees. File may include all records listed under <i>Personnel File, Current Employees, Shadow/Supervisor File, Teachers</i> , plus employee's letter of resignation, termination documentation, and any exit interview.	7 years after retirement, resignation or involuntary termination, then destroy. <i>*See also: Service records</i>

These retentions apply to ALL records, including both paper and electronic.

Personnel Records Retention Schedule (continued)		
Record Type	Description	Retention Period
Personnel File, Substitute Teacher Files	Records concerning the employment of a substitute teacher.	3 years from date of hire, then destroy.
Pension vesting files	Documentation of pension eligibility and benefits.	Permanent.
Retirement benefits	Documentation of retirement benefits.	Permanent.
Safe Environment	Documentation of Safe Environment training and compliance. Note, records after 2016 are maintained in the CMG Connect database. Pre-2016 that have not been entered into CMG Connect are to be maintained at the parish.	Permanent.
Service records (see below)	Document that serves as proof of individuals' position(s) and dates of employment with the parish/school.	Permanent.
Time cards/sheets	Time sheets submitted by employees tracking the number of hours worked per pay period.	4 years, then destroy.
Unemployment Claims		7 years after date of claim, then destroy.
Worker's Compensation Claims	Records of general liability and on-the-job accidents used for compensation claims.	Permanent.

SERVICE RECORDS

A service record is a helpful tool that documents an individual's service at a parish/school. It is particularly useful for teachers who need to prove their service in order to receive tenure in another state or for any employee who needs proof of service to claim eligibility for the pension program. It is essentially a one page summary documenting a person's employment. A parish/school should design their own, but it can look as simple as this:

SERVICE RECORD	
Name of employee:	
Hire date:	
Termination date:	
Position Title	Dates of position held

These retentions apply to ALL records, including both paper and electronic.

PROPERTY RECORDS

Records relating to the building and property of a parish/school. For a definition of discard vs. destroy, see page 3.

Property Records Retention Schedule		
Record Type	Description	Retention Period
Architectural Plans & Drawings, As-Built	Architectural records including blueprints, building designs, specification that show the property as built.	Permanent.
Architectural Plans & Drawings, proposed	Architectural records including blueprints, building designs, specification that were never built.	Until administrative value ceases.
Building Permits	Permits issued by civil authorities authorizing a building project.	6 years after acceptance, then destroy.
Certificate of Occupancy	Document issued by local government agency certifying building's compliance with applicable building codes and other laws.	Permanent.
Chemical Waste Manifest	Includes manifests for asbestos and radon checks.	Permanent.
Equipment Inventory	List of equipment, warranties, and maintenance at parish/school.	Life of item, then discard.
Environmental test records	Reports relating to environmental tests on property, including asbestos and lead.	6 years, then destroy.
Leases, Real Property; Facility Usage Agreements; or Shared Service Agreements	Documentation of third party rights to lease parish facilities or equipment.	7 years after expiration, then destroy.
Mortgage Documents	Mortgage document and any documentation that demonstrates the satisfaction of a mortgage.	Permanent.
Permits, Use of Premises or Facilities	Documentation of third party rights to access and use of parish facilities or equipment.	7 years after expiration, then destroy.
Property Appraisals	Appraisals of properties owned, including sites sold.	Permanent.
Property Sale Documentation	Documentation regarding the sale of a property, including real estate and bank transactions.	Permanent.

These retentions apply to ALL records, including both paper and electronic.

Property Records Retention Schedule (continued)		
Record Type	Description	Retention Period
Proxies	Parish's copy of the proxy issued by the Chancery Office.	Permanent.
Surveys/Plots	Surveys or plots of property/properties owned by the parish, including sites sold.	Permanent.
Titles, Deeds, and Conveyances of Real Estate Property	Includes any title searches or title warranties, including sites sold.	Permanent.

SACRAMENTAL RECORDS

Each parish is to have its own set of sacramental registers. Sacraments are to be recorded in hand printed registers. Entries and annotations are to be made in a timely manner. An electronic database may be used for administrative purposes but it is NOT a replacement for the registers. All certificates must be made from the information in registers, not a database. For more information on sacramental recordkeeping please contact the Archives.

Extra care should be taken in storing these registers. Ideally, they should be kept in a fire-proof safe or vault. They should not be in an area that is subject to large swings in temperature or humidity.

Sacramental registers of closed or merged parishes may be transferred to the Archdiocesan Archives. Parish registers in poor condition and are over 75 years may also be transferred to the Archives.

Sacramental Records Retention Schedules		
Record Type	Description	Retention Period
Annotation notices	Notifications of confirmation, marriages, annulments, etc. that are to be added to a sacramental entry.	Record information in sacramental register, then destroy the notice.
Baptism Register	Official register of baptisms.	Permanent.
First Communion Register (optional)	Official register of First Holy Communions.	Permanent.
Confirmation Register	Official register of confirmations.	Permanent.
Marriage Register	Official register of marriages.	Permanent.
Death Register	Official register of funerals.	Permanent.
Marriage Case Files	Pre-nuptial questionnaire, affidavits, certificates, official correspondence and decrees/permissions/dispensations, etc.	Permanent. PMI paperwork, wedding invitations, routine correspondence should be destroyed following the wedding.

SCHOOL RECORDS

These retentions are specific to a school, but schools may also need to consult the Administrative Records, Financial and Accounting Records, and Personnel Records Retention Schedules. Each parish is responsible for maintaining the records for their parish school. If a school closes but the parish remains open then it is still the responsibility of the parish to maintain permanent school records. For a definition of discard vs. destroy, see page 3.

See resources on pgs. 28-31 for additional information on Student Transcript Best Practices.

When a parish and school both close/merge, records should be transferred to the archdiocesan archives. Please contact the archives for more information.

School Records Retention Schedules		
Record Type	Description	Retention Period
Accreditation Report	Annual Report of the Visiting Team Report	7 years, then discard
Athletic Records	Forms 6145.2 (a-f, h-j, n) Form 6145.2 (g)	5 years after student graduates or leaves the school, then destroy. Form 6145.2(g) – Permanent.
Bus Transportation Contract	Written agreements with local public school districts. Contract with bus company to provide daily student transportation.	6 years, then discard.
Bus Route Listing	Listing of students on specific bus routes.	4 years, then discard.
Choice Reports	Audit reports and Annual School Choice Survey.	Permanent.
Choice Student Applications	Applications and supporting income and residency documentation for all accepted and non-accepted choice students who have submitted applications to the school. Copies of all notices to a student or student’s parent regarding acceptance and non-acceptance, and other correspondence related to the student.	5 years from the end of the school year in which the student applied to the school, unless the department or a law enforcement agency requires the school to retain the records for a longer period.
Correspondence, Official (includes email)	Policy and program planning, official communication, press releases, official statements, discussions relating to strategic initiatives or mission program activities, etc. May include official correspondence between the parish/school and the Chancery, Archbishop’s Office, and/or Schools Office, state and local government officials.	Permanent.

School Records Retention Schedules (continued)		
Record Type	Description	Retention Period
Correspondence, Routine (includes email)	Messages, travel arrangements, meeting appointments, acknowledgements, ordering, transmittals, reminder notices, cover letters, announcements, etc.	Review/Discard annually.
Custody Documents	Records showing legal custody of a child.	Until student is 18 years of age, then destroy.
ESEA/Title Agreements	ESEA Private School Consultation Form.	7 years, then discard.
Field Trip Permission	Forms 6153 (a-d)	5 years, then discard.
Food Service Program Records	Records relating to the school's food service program. May include applications and agreements for Food and Nutrition Programs; applications for free and reduced meals, joint vendor agreements, menus, and daily participation records.	5 years, then destroy.
Instructional Plan Documents	Instructional materials.	Retain until no longer of administrative value.
NCEA Report		Permanent.
Newsletters	Newsletters created, usually weekly or monthly, by the school to relay important information.	Permanent.
Personnel Report	Annual Personnel Report for Elementary / High Schools	Permanent.
School Board / School Advisory Commission	Meeting minutes and agendas of the school board or school committee.	Permanent.
School Enrollment	Annual Student Roster.	Permanent.
School Newspaper / Magazine	Publications of / by school students and activities.	Permanent.
State Aide Payment Reports	Summary report of state aid payments made to a school.	Permanent.
Strategic Plans/Task Force Reports	Final version of strategic plans or task force reports for parish/school.	Permanent.

These retentions apply to ALL records, including both paper and electronic.

School Records Retention Schedules (continued)		
Record Type	Description	Retention Period
Student Accident Reports	Form 5141	Children: Maintain until the child is age 20 years +1 month, then destroy. Always write down the minor's date of birth on the accident report.
Student Records, Behavioral Records	Records for a student that may include individual student disciplinary file, student expulsion report, student suspension report, psychological test results, evaluation records/IEP/accommodations plan.	1 year after the student graduates or leaves the school, then destroy.
Student Records, Cumulative File	A file for each student that includes a record of yearly grades, attendance, courses taken, extracurricular activities, achievement and test results, and degrees awarded.	Permanent. <i>*See resources p. 28-31 for additional information</i>
Student Records, Enrollment	Application, Enrollment or Registration Form to enroll in the school (see also Choice Student Applications).	5 years after student graduates or leaves the school, then destroy.
Student Records, Enforcement Agency Reports	Reports made to enforcement agencies.	2 years after submission of report, then destroy.
Student Records, Emergency Cards	Cards with emergency contact information for each student.	Until superseded or student ceases enrollment.
Student Records, Health Records	Records including immunization records, health care records and medication logs for students.	1 year after student graduates or leaves the school, then destroy.
Student Records, Parent/Physician Consent for Medication	Forms 5141.5 (a-e) Physician excuse from physical education or recess	2 years after end of validity of the request, then destroy.
Student Records, Transfers	Documentation of the transfer of student records to a new school.	5 years after student graduates or leaves the school, then destroy.
Teacher Attendance Records	Attendance taken by teachers to mark daily attendance of students.	1 year after entry of attendance on cumulative record, then destroy.

These retentions apply to ALL records, including both paper and electronic.

School Records Retention Schedules (continued)		
Record Type	Description	Retention Period
Teacher Grade Record	May be hard copy or electronic	1 year after entry of grades on cumulative record, then destroy.
Tuition Reports	Yearly summary report of tuition / fees invoiced, received, and in arrears.	Permanent.
Tuition Records, Student	Record of tuition or fees collected, including tuition contracts and financial aid.	7 years, then destroy.
Yearbooks	Annual publication of school students and activities.	Permanent.

These retentions apply to ALL records, including both paper and electronic.

ADDENDUM: COVID-19 RELATED RECORDS

Financial & Accounting Records

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, parishes and schools may have received financial relief through a number of programs. This includes, but is not limited to, the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund and the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. Parishes and schools must retain all documentation regarding all such programs for at least 7 years.

Personnel Records

Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) personnel leave records should be kept for a minimum 4 years within their employee's medical files. This includes records of oral conversations/statements provided by their employees to support their time off, Leave Request Forms, etc.

Please consult with your financial institution or payroll provider for additional guidance.

RESOURCES:

STUDENT TRANSCRIPT BEST PRACTICES

Student Files Policies

- Consult “Parish and School Policy Manual 5125” for the most current mandated policies.
- Consult “[Records Retention Guidelines for Parishes and Schools](#)” for current retention periods.

Storage & Access of Student Transcripts

- Only authorized personnel should have access to the file cabinets and/or file room
- It is acceptable to have one place for current students and one place for former students
 - Current student files can be kept in the school office
 - Former students can be kept in a more remote (yet still accessible) location

Current Student Files

- Current student files may include:
 - Permanent cumulative file: yearly grades, attendance, courses taken, extracurricular activities, achievement & test results, and degrees awarded.
 - Non-permanent transitory records: disciplinary file, expulsion/suspension report, psychological test results, evaluation records/IEP/accommodations plan, emergency contact information, transfer records, immunization records, health care and medication logs.
 - It is acceptable to have two files for a student: 1 file containing permanent records and 1 transitory file containing records that will ultimately be destroyed. After a student leaves the school, write the destruction date on the top of the transitory folder. Once per year go through and destroy any folder that has met its retention.

Former Student Files

- Former student files should include:
 - Permanent Cumulative File: yearly grades, attendance, courses taken, extracurricular activities, achievement & test results, and degrees awarded.
 - Non-permanent transitory records should be removed from files and shredded after their retention period is over. See [Records Retention Guidelines for Parishes and Schools for current retention periods.](#)

Closed/Merged Schools

- If your school has closed or merged, the student cumulative files and school historical/administrative records should remain at the parish office.
 - All student files should be filed alphabetically by student last name
 - 5 years after the school has closed/merged, student files should be reviewed, and non-permanent records should be shredded leaving only the permanent cumulative file for each student.
- If you do not know where your former school records are, contact the Archdiocesan Archives.

Examples of Student Cumulative Files

Cumulative Files before mid-1970s:

Transcripts before the mid-1970s typically looked like this. This is the permanent record for the student. This single sheet includes student grades, attendance, standardized test scores, dates attended, and biographical information.

For student files that have this document, you should:

- Keep this Individual Record Permanent Record sheet.
- For grades levels recorded on this sheet, you can discard any extra documents such as attendance sheets, yearly grade reports, registration forms, and transfer records.

PERMANENT RECORD
Grades 1 - 8

Archdiocese of Milwaukee
INDIVIDUAL RECORD

Please print or type information
KEEP THIS
as a School Record

Last Name _____

First Name _____

Middle Name _____

DATE OF BIRTH: _____

Year Month Day

PLACE OF BIRTH: _____

City State Sex

KDGN. ATTENDED: _____

No. of Years

	SCHOLARSHIP	CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT		TRANSFER RECORD		
YEAR		YEAR		Schools Attended	Date of Admission	Date of Leaving
GRADE		GRADE		Grade One, etc.		
RELIGION		EFFORT				
ARITHMETIC		MEANING OF MARKS				
READING		A—Excellent —works to capacity consistently B—Very Good —makes continuous effort to improve C—Average —meets minimum requirements D—Unsatisfactory —does not work to capacity				
LANGUAGE		CONDUCT				
SPELLING		MEANING OF MARKS				
GEOGRAPHY		A—Excellent —observes school regulations consistently whether supervised or not B—Very Good —makes continuous effort to observe school regulations C—Average —gives minimum cooperation but is improving D—Unsatisfactory —violates school regulations frequently				
HISTORY		STUDY HABITS				
SCIENCE		MEANING OF MARKS				
PENMANSHIP		A—Excellent —fulfills assignments consistently and does independent study B—Very Good —makes continuous effort to complete assignments satisfactorily C—Average —does assignments with minimum application D—Unsatisfactory —fails repeatedly to complete required assignments				
MUSIC		ATTENDANCE				
ART		1/2 DAYS PRESENT				
DOMESTIC ARTS		1/2 DAYS ABSENT				
MANUAL ARTS		TARDY				
PHYSICAL EDUCATION						
PROMOTION						

MARKS — Use letters for PENMANSHIP, MUSIC, ART, and PHYSICAL EDUCATION.
 Use numerals for all other subjects.

A — 100-93 Outstanding Achievement
C — 84-77 Average Achievement

B — 92-85 Above Average Achievement
D — 76-70 Below Average Achievement

Below 70 Failure

Examples of Student Cumulative Files

Cumulative Files mid-1970s through early-2000s:

Transcripts from the mid-1970s through the early-2000s typically looked like this. This form is typically 2-pages that are attached to form a folder. The information includes attendance, standardized test scores, dates attended, and biographical information – there is NOT a space to record individual student grades.

For student files that have this document, you should:

- Keep all pages of the Cumulative Record form
- Keep all annual grade reports for each year the student attended (may be several pages)
- Discard non-permanent transitory files (behavior reports, immunization/health records, etc.)

CATEGORY A DATA	ARCHDIOCESE OF MILWAUKEE	KEEP PERMANENTLY
	CUMULATIVE RECORD	5125.2 DE-SU-7(74)
<u>PERSONAL DATA</u>		
<u>NAME</u>		<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Last	First	Middle
<u>BIRTH</u>		M F
Year	Month	Day
<u>FATHER (GUARDIAN)</u>		Place
<u>MOTHER</u>		Maiden Name
<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>PHONE</u>	<u>DATE</u>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
<u>ATTENDANCE</u>		
Level/Grade		
Year Ending		
½ Days Present		
½ Days Absent		
Times Tardy		
<u>ADMISSION AND TRANSFER DATA</u>		
<u>School</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>State</u>
<u>Date</u>		
Entered from _____	_____	_____
Admitted to _____	_____	_____
Transferred to _____	_____	_____
Transferred to _____	_____	_____
Transferred to _____	_____	_____
Transferred to _____	_____	_____
Note: The name of your school must appear on the line labeled "Admitted to."		

Example of Student Cumulative Files

Electronic Cumulative Files

Student records are increasingly being stored electronically through databases and software systems such as PowerSchool.

For student records that are kept electronically:

- ELECTRONIC RECORDS SHOULD BE HANDLED THE SAME AS TRADITIONAL PAPER RECORDS
- Choose a software program that can print reports and information in paper and/or PDF formats.
- It is advised that records that would traditionally be in the Permanent Cumulative File be printed at the end of each school year and kept in individual student files.
- Records that are non-permanent can be kept electronically within the software system, but should be reviewed and deleted when the retention period has expired.