

Diocese of La Crosse Religious Certification Program

The Certification Program consists of receiving Basic Certification, followed by initial Advanced Certification and then keeping certification updated every 5 yrs with Advanced Renewal. This is required for all administrators, teachers, and counselors - all professional contracted staff who are full-time or 50% or more part-time, Dean of Students, Athletic Directors & Campus Min., etc.

How do I earn Basic Certification? Completing New Teacher Formation & Symbolon

- All professional staff hired since 2023 have three years to complete New Teacher Formation. Three face-to-face classes: 1) Teaching as Ministry, 2) Scripture, and 3) Prayer and Sacraments as well as 4) Part I of Symbolon DVD Program are to be completed to earn Basic Certification. The face-to-face sessions are offered in August to keep new teachers in the classroom and reduce the number of substitutes.
- The 10 sessions of Symbolon Part One and workbook are to be completed with a group of teachers on a regular schedule. (Workbooks for purchase on Catholic Market.) One new teacher may join with others at a nearby school or wait till the second year. After completing Symbolon Part One, the Certification Completion Form is to be filled out in its entirety, including dates, initials, and signatures, and emailed to the Office for Catholic Schools. Form is available at diolc.org/schools then scroll to Religious Certification Program. After completing Symbolon Part One and the 3 face-to-face sessions, the Schools Office is to be notified to issue a Basic certificate. A certification folder is not to be submitted after completing Basic Certification.
- Teachers and administrators who were hired spring–summer of 2022 or earlier, who have not completed Basic Certification, will need to complete their New Teacher Formation face-to-face sessions *and* Symbolon Part 1 this academic year, by August 2025.
- All professional staff new to the Diocese, including teachers transferring from another Diocese or who have earned a degree in Theology or related studies, must attend Teaching as Ministry. The Office for Catechesis & Evangelization will need to review college transcripts and certification hours from another Diocese to give proper credit.
- During this three-year period, new staff will also be receiving certification hours from the Diocesan Spring Faith Inservice provided for all teachers by the Offices for Catholic Schools and Catechesis & Evangelization. These hours apply toward Advanced Certification.
- New teachers & new administrators are also to complete one *Franciscan at Home* workshop with a group every year, in conjunction with a school inservice. Each learner's responses are to be recorded and submitted on *Franciscan at Home* to receive credit.

What is the plan for initial Advanced Certification?

To complete Advanced Certification, 90 hours are to be earned over a five-year cycle, (82 hours are required for certified teachers as eight hours of methodology are waived.) The hours are earned in four categories: Scripture, Doctrine (Theology), Catholic Spirituality, and Methods.

What is the plan for Advanced Renewal?

Once Advanced Certification is earned, Advanced Renewal continues as long as a teacher is working at a Catholic School. Adv. Renewal is to be obtained every 5 yrs by earning 12 hrs per year from the annual spring diocesan inservice (6 hours) and completing at least one *Franciscan at Home* workshop (4 hours per workshop) in a group study. An additional 2 hours is to be earned



through a 2nd workshop or approved resource or speaker. Adv. Renewal is issued in 5 yr. cycles.

How will I earn hours for Advanced or Advanced Renewal?

Opportunities will be provided at the diocesan and system/school level. Note: If teachers need to earn individual hours, they are best completed with a group.

- The Diocese of La Crosse will provide 6 hours of personal faith formation at the spring Diocesan inservice each year. (All staff are required to attend Fall Regionals, but religious certification credit is *not* given since these gatherings are not focused on the Faith)
- *Franciscan At Home* online learning system is the *preferred* means of earning certification hours. One workshop per year is required and is to be completed within small groups, Workshops are worth 4 hours. Each learner's responses are to be recorded and submitted on *Franciscan At Home* to receive credit. This will show that that the workshop has been completed and becomes a permanent record. A printed page that shows the completed workshop(s) is to be placed in the folder when it is due for submission. Since 2021, two workshops are required to complete Advanced or Advanced Renewal: 1) *The Mission of Catholic Schools & the Role of Teachers* and 2) *The Human Person in God's Loving Plan*.
 - For professional staff working toward initial Advanced Certification, they will need to earn **6** hours from the Diocese and **12** hours from the school annually. Being part of a group is the ideal. These hours are primarily to be earned through *Franciscan at Home*. Qualified speakers or materials are to be approved ahead of time by the Office.
 - A list of resources, approved by the Office for Catechesis, is available at the Diocesan website: diolc.org/schools "Religious Certification Program."
 - Up to 15 hours of credit are available for attending 10 sessions of Part II of Symbolon. The Symbolon form is to be filled out in its entirety & placed in one's certification folder.

Why does each contracted, professional person on staff need a certification folder?

It is each person's responsibility to record religious formation hours earned, provide supporting paperwork for the current five-year period, and keep the folder on file with the building administrator. Folders are to be categorized in good order according to **Diocesan inservices**, **school inservices**, and **individual hours – with a small group**. It is preferable to send all certification folders of the school at the same time with sufficient hours so as to be on the same certification cycle.

How is information to be recorded on the yellow certification folders?

When a teacher completes hours for certification – Advanced and Advanced Renewal – the teacher should ask his/her building administrator for the folder, update it, include matching paperwork, get the principal's verification (initials) and return it to the school office.

Front Cover of Certification Folder: Fill in your personal information.

- Basic, Advanced and Ad. Renewal completion dates will be completed by the Office for C & E.

Other Panels: Record diocesan & school inservices & individual studies, initialed by the administrator. Diocesan inservice certificates, current study reflections / answers to discussion questions, completed booklets (not agendas), and *Franciscan at Home* workshop completion page are to be kept in folders.

Who do I contact if I have questions?

Contact your administrator with questions regarding the process; Ann Lankford alankford@diolc.org for overall questions and college religion & transfer credit; Beth Johnson bjohnson@diolc.org for staff status, submission and reviewing folders, and issuing certificates.

