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ALERT

Struggling Catholic schools now need St. Louis archbishop's OK to hire teachers for next year

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Archbishop Mitchell Rozanski speaks to reporters during a press conference at the Cardinal Rigali Center in Shrewsbury to discuss the details of the "All Things New" plan laying out parish reorganization and priest reassignments in the Archdiocese of St. Louis on Saturday, May 27, 2023.

Michael Clubb, Post-Dispatch

Official decree document from the Archdiocese of St. Louis, featuring the archdiocesan seal and the signature of Archbishop Mitchell S. Rozanski.

St. Louis archbishop's decree for parish schools

SHREWSBURY — Catholic schools that are primarily subsidized by their parishioners will need the archbishop's permission to hire teachers for the next school year.

Parishes that dip into their savings to help run their schools will face the same rule, according to the decree effective Jan. 15 from Archbishop Mitchell Rozanski of the Archdiocese of St. Louis.

Any parish that spends 5% or more from savings, or 50% or more from annual Sunday offerings, to operate its parochial school must receive Rozanski's go-ahead before offering contracts to teachers and principals for 2025-26. Contracts at Catholic schools are generally signed each March.

The local Catholic education system is financially unsustainable, with too many grade schools for not enough students, archdiocesan leaders have said. Enrollment across all buildings has fallen below 65% capacity, straining the ability of parishes to subsidize an average school operating deficit of \$600,000 each year.

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The "All Things New" downsizing plan in May 2023 resulted in the closure or merger of close to 50 parishes across the archdiocese, but most of the 82 parochial schools have survived.

It is unclear what the decree means for schools that no longer have their own parish, such as Blessed Teresa of Calcutta in Ferguson, which was absorbed by Sacred Heart in Florissant in the restructuring, or for schools like St. Louis Catholic Academy in north St. Louis that are almost entirely subsidized by the archdiocese.

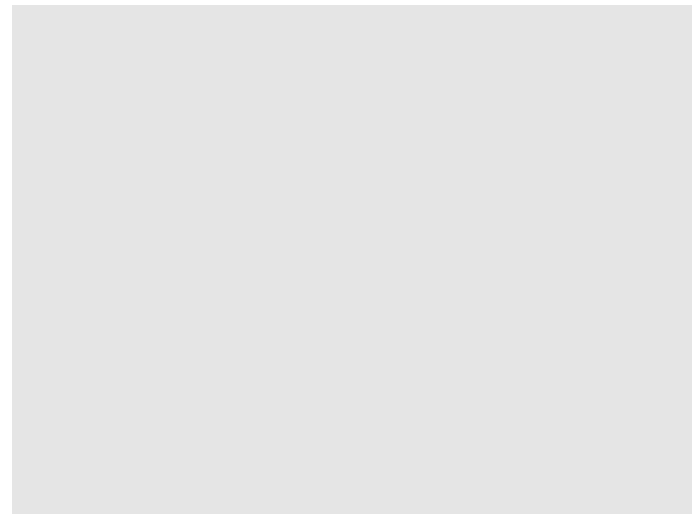
The subsidy from parishioners for a school should not be higher than 30% for financial viability, church leaders have said.

On average, the operating deficit of each school equaled 40% of the parish's offertory and gifts in 2022, according to the latest figures released by the archdiocese.

Original blueprints for "All Things New" called for one-third to one-half of the 82 archdiocesan grade schools to close or merge. But pastors and parishioners have rallied to save most of the schools.

A total of eight parish schools will have closed since the start of the restructuring process three years ago. Little Flower in Richmond Heights, St. Monica in Creve Coeur and St. Roch in St. Louis closed last spring. Good Shepherd in Hillsboro, St. Mark in south St. Louis County and St. Rose in Florissant closed in 2023.

Two parish schools have announced their closures at the end of the 2024-25 academic year — **Our Lady of Guadalupe in Cool Valley** and **St. Joseph in Ste. Genevieve County**.



Ed McAllister, 81, prays with others as he protests the Archdiocese of St. Louis' decision to close St. Monica Catholic School at the end of the academic year Friday, May 10, 2024, outside St. Monica Catholic Church in Creve Coeur. McAllister said he had nine children attend St. Monica and currently has a grandson enrolled in the school. Photo by Christine Tannous, ctannous@post-dispatch.com

Christine Tannous, Post-Dispatch



Archbishop Mitchell Rozanski speaks at the ribbon-cutting of the new location for St. Louis Catholic Academy in north St. Louis on Thursday, April 18, 2024.

St. Louis unlikely to see large-scale closures of Catholic grade schools

Blythe Bernhard , Josh Renaud

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Education reporter
