The Epiphany Houses Handbook
The House System

The house system is a traditional feature of schools in the English-speaking world, particularly in Commonwealth countries (like Canada), and originated in England. A school is divided into subunits called 'houses' and each student is allocated to one house upon enrolment. Houses may compete with one another at sports and maybe in other ways, thus providing a focus for group loyalty.

Different schools will have a different number of houses, so that some might have more than 10 houses or as few as four. Historically, the house system was associated with established public schools in England, especially full boarding schools, where a 'house' referred to a boarding house at the school. In modern times, in both day and boarding schools, the word 'house' may refer only to a grouping of pupils, rather than to a particular building.

Houses may be named after saints, famous historical alumni, or notable regional topics (e.g., at Epiphany, our Houses are named after the Four Magi who visited the newborn King). Other more arbitrary names—animal names or colours, for example—are also often used. Each house will usually also be identified by its own symbol, logo, banner, or colours.

One of the main purposes of schools is to provide care for a child during the school day - The house system was originally established to provide pastoral care to the students. With parents absent, children are likely to depend on the school to look after their basic physical, social and emotional needs throughout their stay at school. The Harry Potter books have updated the boarding school model to modern values and in some respects the modern depiction of the House System in some schools.

Competition between Houses

A secondary feature of house systems is the friendly competition between houses. For example, the traditional school sports day is usually an inter-house competition. Friendly competitions, fundraisers, and charity drives are also often organized along House lines for the benefit of the whole school and/or the benefitting organization. Merit points for positive comportment in all areas of
school life, participatory engagement in activities and demonstrating leadership may also be totalled up for comparison between houses. The culmination is the tallying of all house merit points in an effort for a particular house with the most points to win “The House Cup” and possibly a token prize at the end of the year.

**Student Leaders (House Captains)**
Pupils are usually assigned to houses randomly, perhaps with the aim of balancing the houses in order to increase competition. Sometimes the assignment is based on the social and emotional needs of the student and to ensure proper peer mentoring is enhanced with the right fit of students within a house. Traditionally, however, once a pupil has been assigned to a house, any younger siblings he or she has may automatically become members of that house when they arrive at the school (unless parents feel otherwise). Once a pupil has been allocated to a house they stay with that house as they move up through the year groups. One notable feature of the house system is the appointment of *House Captains* (e.g., at Epiphany there are 2-grade 8 students per House assigned to be House Captains), who exercise limited authority within the house and assist in the organization of the house and activities.

**Staff Leaders (House Mentor Leader)**
At Epiphany, the term “*House Mentor Leader*” is held by the members of staff responsible for pupils in a particular house. In some ways, staff members can be seen as “*head of the house*”. House mentor leaders take the responsibility of being role models and ensure that house activities are organized and well run and students are engaged in such activities.
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The House System provides the framework for pastoral care of students, encourages participation in sporting and cultural co-curricular activities, and promotes leadership development. The House System promotes a keen but good-natured rivalry between House teams to see who will win the House Trophy at the end of each year. Points towards this prize accumulate from the various sporting and cultural, and other friendly competitions that are held throughout the year.

By setting up a House System, we believe that strong house loyalty and a sense of fun and friendly competition will continue to provide opportunities for personal growth and success, as well as create a fun-filled and positive school atmosphere.

During the year, the Houses compete against each other in a number of activities which may change from year to year. Some of these activities are listed below:

- Physical activity competitions (Carnaval, Sports Day, Husky Fun Day)
- Organization of Sports Events (i.e., Soccer, Volleyball etc.)
- Participation in before and after school physical activities
- Community outreach programs and charities
- Contribution to school Culture
- Building projects at the school (e.g. Science fair competition)
- Competitions (i.e., organize school events, initiatives, tournaments)

House groups can also be used to:
- To welcome visitors to the school
- Represent the school at functions
- Co-ordinate activities around the school or sporting/club events
- Develop a sense of ownership and pride at Epiphany
- Develop a sense of responsibility in the care of their school
The House System at Epiphany of Our Lord Catholic Academy of Learning is designed to encourage both community and friendly competition between students in a supportive and inclusive environment. At Epiphany, the house system has many benefits. This new system is part of our continued focus on whole-student success (i.e., Growth Mindset) and will encourage students to form positive relationships with fellow students at all grade levels.

Mixing the students from all grades in the house provides more opportunities for students to meet peers with whom they may not otherwise interact, and the youngest students feel more relaxed moving up to middle grades and likewise the junior students have improved relations with intermediate students. Staff and student relationships improve as a result of them interacting outside the classroom. Positive peer relations gets students involved in activities in order to support their house and students gain a sense of pride in being able to contribute. When all students feel they can make a difference it creates a climate where students and staff want to be, making the House System a win-win situation!

Epiphany of Our Lord Catholic Academy of Learning recognizes the abilities of each student and works on developing, strengthening, and fostering growth in each student. Upon entering the school, students will feel a sense of belonging by becoming part of a House community all belonging to God’s family - as Jesus is the Head of each House.

The House system develops positive interaction among grade levels from Pre-K through to Grade Eight. Students will have the opportunity to gain merit points, both individually and collectively for their House, through various activities/events held at the school. This in turn, will promote healthy competition and allow a sense of mentoring and leadership to build up between the older and the younger students.

With the exception of Administration, each teaching staff member will be placed in a House. The even distribution of staff will allow students to become more familiar with those staff members they rarely have a chance to interact with, or turn to for support.
The House system dovetails nicely into our existing **Virtues of the Month**, **Catholic Graduate Expectations, Catholic Social Teachings**, and our continued emphasis on **Growth Mindset** and **Rigour**.

The purpose of each house is to guide and support the academic, social, emotional, spiritual, and personal development of each student during their time at school. House Captains (Grade 8 students) will build strong partnerships with student to help each student relate in a more positive way to life in school. This concept is akin to fostering a 'Family Unit' and is further reinforced by the fact that we all belong and all of us are welcome in God’s family. The sense of “family” in each of the 4 houses will promote a feeling of identity and belonging and of self-worth.

Essentially, we believe that the House System will support our students by achieving the following:

- **Student Centered Focus**: Each student will be treated as an individual.
- **A caring, supportive environment**: Each student will be a valued member of a small 'family unit' within a larger 'family' within the whole school ... and foster a “Growth Mindset”.
- **Respect, consideration and courtesy**.
- **A well-ordered, stimulating and enjoyable atmosphere in which deep learning and effective teaching can flourish ... a school with rigour and relevance**.
- **Support for each of our students who are motivated to learn (do well in school) and serve (do good because it’s good to do)**
- **Positive self-esteem amongst students and value of the ethos of the school community**.
- **The opportunity to obtain the essential learning skills necessary for a rapidly changing society (The Seven Essential Survival Skills)**.
- **Equal opportunity and encouragement to achieve a student’s full potential**.
- **Building of interpersonal skills within groups of students of all ages**.
- **Peer support to prevent bullying and stop it when necessary**.
- **Promotion of Student Responsibility, Team skills, Leadership skills, collaboration and Co-operation**.
• Co-curricular activities which will enhance each student’s school experience.
• Development of personal and social skills and well-being.
• A school in which Students, Parents, Staff, Administrators and the wider School community can be justly proud.

Our House System helps us to set the conditions for student achievement and excellence ...

The Magi

Reflecting both our Catholic foundation, and the strength of our school, each House will be represented under the House name of one of the Magi. Each Magi has his own story which will gradually unfold and evolve over the years as the story of each House is written. Stories are told about the Kings (Magi) travelling from afar to bring gifts to the newborn King.
This is how the Magi are often described:

**Caspar**, who has brown hair and a brown beard and wears a green cloak and a gold crown with green jewels on it. He is the King of Sheba. Gaspar represents the Frankincense brought to Jesus.

**Melchior**, who has long white hair and a white beard and wears a gold cloak. He is the King of Arabia. Melchior represents the Gold brought to Jesus.

**Balthazar**, who has a black beard and wears a purple cloak. He is the King of Tarse and Egypt. Balthazar represents the gift of Myrrh that was brought to Jesus.

But wait ... We have four houses - Who represents the fourth house?

Most people know only of three wise men (Magi) making the journey to find the newborn King. Yet, is it not possible that there was indeed a fourth magi? Quite possible ... but, I leave the message as the truth to his story.

This magi’s story is one of giving, perseverance, and discipleship ... a story of Love

The fourth magi was named **Artaban**.

*Click the link to watch this short video presentation of his story:*  
▶️ http://youtu.be/-IS58VSKB_k

**The Story of the Fourth Magi - The Movie (1hr. 11min.)**  
Click the link below to watch the story of Artaban’s (fourth wise man) search for the Lord Jesus, bearing gifts which he used to help others, but indeed he was giving to the Lord.

The message: *Do good because it's good to do!*

*Click this link to watch the full-length movie:*  
▶️ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EWbrrtRYr3Y
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The Magi Houses

Each House takes its name from one of the Magi
Throughout the year, students earn House Points for their positive engagement and participation in class, during assemblies, during events/activities, at recess, on the bus, and on the playground. House Points are given for positive comportment such as co-operation, kindness, good sportsmanship, tolerance, respect, and effort. The Houses provide not only an increased feeling of identity and belonging, but they also provide students with a sense of tradition and leadership opportunities.

Epiphany has four Magi Houses. Students in JK through Grade 8 are divided into mixed-grade level houses. Each house is named after one of the four Magi – Artaban, Melchior, Balthazar, and Caspar. Teachers (House Mentor Leaders) oversee each one of the Epiphany Houses and House Captains (Grade 8 students) lead each Epiphany House. House Captains will be two-Grade 8 students (i.e., 1 male and 1 female student). House Captains apply for the role and each is selected by the Grade 8 Teacher in consultation with the Teacher-Mentors for each particular House.
Individual students earn points for their house by participating in school events, community service projects and extracurricular activities. Students keep track of their own involvement on sheets and must get signatures from adults who sponsor/supervise each event or activity they participate in. What constitutes an activity that will earn House Points and how they are awarded and how many will no doubt evolve and change over time and as tradition will dictate – With the coming and going of new students, new teachers and new administration will come change and a better way.

In short, House Points can be earned based on one’s demonstration of positive participation, leadership skills, and personal engagement in activities/events within the school and in the community.

**Point Sheet System**
Students are given an individual *Point Sheet* each month (or week). Point Sheets are provided to all House Mentor Leaders (staff), Coaches (School Sports/Clubs), and Leaders (Intramurals) to provide to students. Point sheets are signed by adults and kept by students. At the end of the week and/or month, Point Sheets are handed in to the classroom teacher who forwards the Point Sheets to the Principal at the end of each week (or month).

**NOTE:** Student Point Sheets are filled in by students and signed by the staff member who is in charge of the particular activity/event/sport or by the classroom teacher (if a classroom event) in some instances.

**Individual Points**
Students have the opportunity to earn points for their house through a series of activities, events, participation in co-curricular activities and good deeds, with the winning house ultimately receiving a trophy at the end of the year. Houses may accumulate points through events and competitions such Husky Sports Days, Husky Fun Day, Carnaval, Talent Show, and other friendly competitions.
House achievement will be celebrated at our monthly assembly when a House Standings will be noted and at the Principal’s discretion some incentives may be provided. The goal of this activity is to give focus and motivation to students both as individuals and a collective and encourage positive behavior and engagement in the culture and spirit of the school. Here is how it works:

**House Points are awarded to each student for the following (These are merely examples of some point possibilities):**

- Participation in School Lunches
- Participation in purchase of House Shirt
- Participation in School Nights (i.e., Bingo Night)
- School Team Sports or Club
- Co-curricular or Intramural Sports or Clubs
- Coaching a school team
- Teacher Points – Classroom Comportment
- Hosting Virtue/Rosary Gathering of Faith Assembly
- Participation in Epiphany Fundraisers
- “Gotcha - Caught you doing good” - Gotcha tickets are given to students by the principal and students can place a “Gotcha Ticket” in the “Gotcha box” in the Office
- Points for significant one-time contribution
- Points for significant long-term contribution
- Points for exemplary contribution of significance
- Principal’s Final Day Albus Points

**Office Tally Sheet:**
The Principal tallies all points from the Student Point Sheets and all other Point Sheets from teachers, coaches, leaders, and House Mentor Leaders.

**Staff Tally Sheet:**
Points by Coaches and Club Leaders: Student Point Sheets are signed at the end of the Sport or Club

Points by Teachers: Student Point Sheets are signed for students at the teachers’ discretion
Points by House Mentor Leader: Student Point Sheets are signed at discretion of the House Mentor Leader

Points (Principal): Points are added and displayed at the end of every week

Points ("Gotcha") Principal tallies at the end of each week or month.

Points (Special events - Talent Show, Play Day, etc) – Student Point Sheets signed at the end of event by staff member in charge

The House Team Members

The House team will consist of:

- House Mentor Leaders (Staff Members), who ensure that all House activities are organized well.
- House Captains (2-Grade 8 students) who show leadership and guidance
- All students from JK - Gr.8 will be assigned into a particular House

House-Wide Gatherings and Meetings

The purpose is for all four Houses to congregate in a common area for friendly competition, meeting, announcements, presentations, shows, and as a community. The individual houses use this time to interact with one another, to build community, teamwork, have fun, share experiences, and participate in activities demonstrating good sportsmanship.
Individual House Gatherings and Meetings
The purpose of this is to come together as individual house to get to know one another, collect and distribute information and point sheets, plan House events for the school, and meet to discuss matters that need attention (i.e., fundraising issues, planning an event/activity, or dealing with a concern).

House Husky Sporting Days
Term 1 (September to January) ... Two Houses get together to plan a day of Activities that all students engage in (i.e., Four Events to choose from and all students/staff choose to partake in one)

Term 2 (February to June) ... Two Houses get together to plan a day of Activities that all students engage in (i.e., Four Events to choose from and all students/staff choose to partake in one)

Principal’s Challenge: At any time during the year there will be a number of “challenges” for students and Houses to participate in for a particular purpose (and House Points will be earned).

End of Year Awards: The House Cup
In June, during the final Virtue/Rosary Gathering of the year, we will have an award ceremony to award the Epiphany House Cup to the House with the most accumulated points over the year.

Winning House: The house with the most accumulated points for the year wins a FREE PIZZA LUNCH and is awarded the Epiphany House Cup with a plaque stating they are the winners.

The School Pledge
I pledge today and every day to do my best in all I do.
I promise to do good because it’s good to do.
I will respect myself, respect others, and respect God.
I will treat others the way I want to be treated, because we all belong to God’s family.
I am here to learn all I can, to try my best, and be all I am.
I know that life is work – and I will work in all I do to be all I can!
Husky Pride ... “Gotcha doing good”

We honour students whom have been caught demonstrating Husky Pride – Throughout the month, people submit names of students (in a drop box in the Office) in an anonymous manner and write why this person stood out. There is no prize ... There is no award and there is not even a certificate of any kind - Nothing of the sort! There’s only one thing that comes with the Gotcha Programme - The knowledge that somebody has done something good that someone noticed – and that’s called “Doing good, because it’s good to do!”

Note:
When teachers hand in the House Points Sheets, they can add a sheet with any other points they wish to add – either to individual students or to a particular house for that month.

Conclusion:

The House System at Epiphany is a living system – That is, it will evolve, change, get better, and continue to nurture our school in ways we may not even be aware of or know about. Yet, we can say quite definitively that when one loves, there are no bounds to what can be or who we can be.

“Let us always meet each other with a smile, for the smile is the beginning of love.” – Mother Teresa

“Where there is love there is life.” – Mahatma Gandhi

“Keep love in your heart. A life without it is like a sunless garden when the flowers are dead.” – Oscar Wilde

“I believe that imagination is stronger than knowledge. That myth is more potent than history. That dreams are more powerful than facts. That hope always triumphs over experience. That laughter is the only cure for grief. And I believe that love is stronger than death.” – Robert Fulghum