



# ARCHDIOCESE of PHILADELPHIA SCHOOLS

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## Catholic Education Coronavirus Taskforce Newsletter

March 24, 2020

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The Archdiocese has a Catholic Education Coronavirus Taskforce whose mission is to provide guidance to schools in effectively navigating this national public health crisis. While traditional classroom instruction is suspended right now, we are not closed. Learning continues through a flexible instruction model for the benefit of the children and school families we serve. So in this first newsletter, we wanted to share some of the great work and creativity of our administrators, faculty and students. Per the Governor's announcement, all of our school buildings will remain closed through at least April 6, 2020, but we will continue with our flexible instruction model.

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### ***We Walk By Faith***

A Message from Father Matthew Guckin  
Director of Catholic Mission and Identity

Dear Friends in Christ,

*We walk by faith, and not by sight!*

How often have we read these words of Saint Paul? How many times have we sung them in church?

Coronavirus has put us at a spiritual crossroads. We can walk by faith....or not.

If we choose the path of faith we are choosing to go to God, to cling to God and to trust in God.

There are so many places to "go" during times of uncertainty. We can 'go' to social media. We can 'go' to our family and friends. We can choose to go to some destructive action. The person who chooses to walk by faith goes to God. I recommend you set up a schedule of daily prayer in order to do this. Pray the rosary. Watch Mass online or television. Make a holy hour. Go to God!



But if we want to walk by faith we also have to cling to God. The Latin word for 'Lord' is Dominus. In a sense, God should dominate our thoughts and words and choices. I recommend we imitate the persistent widow Jesus commends in the Gospel by going to God constantly. God LOVES to be nagged.

Finally, walking by faith means that we trust in God. And this is the hardest dimension of all. In order to go forward in trust, we need to first look backward and recall all the good things God has done for us throughout our lives. Think back to those times when God seemed so very near. Perhaps it was the day of your wedding, the birth of your child, the comfort you experienced by a friend or maybe even a miracle. It's vital you think back to those moments and write them down. This will help us to trust God so we can walk by faith, and not just by sight.

Friends, these are trying times. We need our Faith now more than ever. Let's go to God. Let's cling to God. And let's trust in God and be confident that he is here to save us!

Sincerely,  
Father Matt Guckin  
Director, Catholic Mission & Identity

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## Archbishop Pérez's Message to School Students



Just a short time ago we welcomed Archbishop Pérez back home to Philadelphia as our new Shepherd. Ministry to youth and young adults has always been close to his heart. Last week he recorded and released a video to address all of our students in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this pastoral message he said, "Much has been asked of you recently and I understand you may be anxious. I'm sure you'd rather be with your classmates and taking part in the many academic, spiritual, social, and athletic activities your school offers. I very much wish you could be doing those things too. In order to keep you as safe possible though, it was necessary to make some changes to the way we provide your education.

The decision to change to a more flexible classroom instruction model was made only after much prayer and careful planning. I'm grateful to you, your families, your teachers, and our administrators in the Office of Catholic Education." In case you have not yet seen the full video you can view it here [Spiritual Message to the School Students of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia](#).

All of us are grateful for the Archbishop's inspiring leadership during these trying times. Please join us in praying for him and his intentions.

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From the Office of the  
Superintendent of  
Secondary Schools

**Secondary School Communities:  
Meeting the Challenge  
with Faith, Creativity and Commitment**

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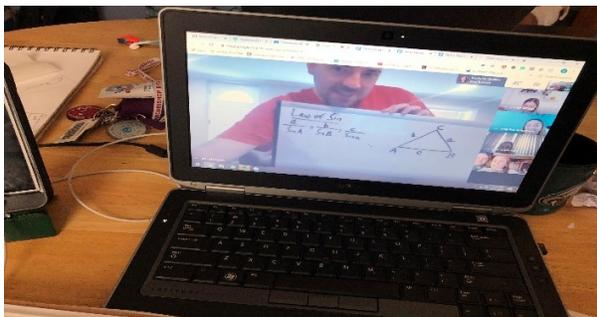


Catholic School educators across the Archdiocese of Philadelphia faced a sudden and tremendous challenge over a week ago when it became necessary to cease classroom instruction in our schools and implement a flexible instruction model to provide for the health and safety of our school communities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Secondary teachers of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia schools rose to the occasion with great care, competence and commitment for their students..

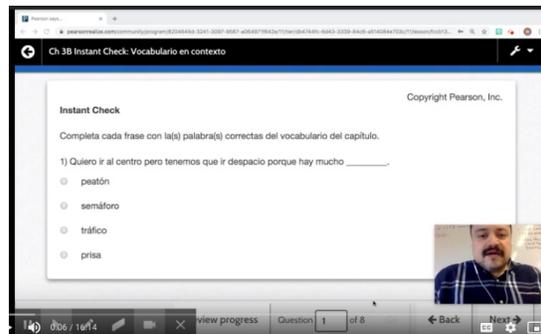
AOP Secondary Teachers across the 17 high schools immediately gathered their educational materials and technology tools while moving to the safety of their own homes and began to deliver quality online instruction to their students. Using tools like Google Suite, Google Hangout, ZOOM, Screencastify, and Loom, teachers reimagined how instruction could be rigorous, interactive, personal, and immediate each day for their students who would be attending school from the safety of their own homes.

We are grateful for the ongoing commitment of our teachers who took up this unexpected challenge on behalf of their students to learn and embrace developing a school community without walls but with excellent lessons.

Below are just a few samples of AOP teachers, administrators and staff supporting our students. Likewise, students have also responded to the challenges of creating a virtual school community. Archbishop Wood's National Honor Society members are offering tutoring via Zoom or Facetime. Bishop Shanahan Student Council is offering afterschool online activities for the student body. AOP Teachers and Students have answered the challenge with faith, creativity, and commitment.



**Archbishop Ryan's** Mr. Michael James presents Algebra Concepts to his Algebra II class using ZOOM. Students are able to interact with their teacher in real time



Mr. Walter Perez of **Cardinal O'Hara** presents his Spanish lessons to his students. Hola, Señor Perez!



**West Catholic Prep** launched a virtual instruction platform. Led by Principal Kelly Lanza (pictured left) students gather at 9:45 a.m. to pray, hear announcements and we take daily attendance. At 10:00 a.m., students join their teachers via the Zoom platform and/or Google Hangouts to learn. Teachers are creating flipped classrooms, preparing lessons utilizing programs such as Educreations and Screencast-O-Matic. Teachers are posting assignments on Google classroom and continuing best practices such as bell ringers and exit tickets to ensure that every student is present and engaged in the lessons.

The **Conwell Egan Catholic Choir**

rehearsal has not been slowed down by the Coronavirus. CEC Music Director, Tom Kuchler scheduled group sessions daily with his students. These virtual sessions have not only allowed the students to stay engaged with the curriculum, they have also provided a sense of community for our students at such a critical time.



From the Office of the  
Secretary of  
Elementary Education

## Elementary Schools: Praying, Learning and Meeting the Challenge



For the 104 Elementary Schools of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia active learning continues taking place via the Internet and learning packets. As educators, our professional vocabulary has expanded to include ZOOM, Google Hangouts, GoToMeeting, Flippity, Kohoot, and Class Dojo just to name a few. Teachers scoured the Internet and shared best resources and practices with one another to meet the needs of their

students. Many digital education resources services opened their sites free of charge during this time of national crisis and our teachers found them.

A short visit to Facebook searching for our schools reveals the quality of instruction taking place. For many schools, classes are almost as usual with a half day schedule where the teacher is providing video instruction. Principals begin their day online with a prayer, pledge of allegiance, and morning announcements. Teachers then progress through the day with students submitting work via Google Classroom. Many teachers have converted workbook pages into Google Forms and attach a video to accompany the lesson. One principal entertained her school community playing the accordion online.

Parents have praised the efforts of the schools. Some have even reported that their children put on their school uniform and process to their home learning environment for instruction. One parent needed to purchase a bell because her preschooler would not finish her lunch until the bell signaled completion. One parent stated that the teacher has been to her home three times to drop off work because the child had been sick prior to the shutdown. This teacher delivered books to every student in her classroom because she knew they would be needed. On a lighter note, many parents jokingly say that home schooling will not be an option for them. Should we tell the parents to pray for a fire drill?

Some of our students do not have access to technology. In these schools, teachers have worked feverishly to provide learning packets that were sent home and additional work is now in the process of being created.

Principals and teachers are expanding their technological abilities to learn new resources that may be transferred to students. Dr. Andrew McLaughlin, secretary of elementary education, along with the assistant superintendents, conduct weekly Zoom meetings with the principals. Many principals then have the same online meetings with their faculty. Many teachers employ Zoom that gives the students the ability to interact with one another while sitting in front of their own devices.

- With all things, there have been some learning curves. The biggest concerns seem to be the amount of work given to all students when some children work much faster than others.
- understanding that some parents are essential personnel and are not home with their children.

- assignment collection during a given time period.
- students wanting to interact with teachers all hours of the day.

Given what our principals, teachers, students, and parents have accomplished, the Archdiocese has embraced this Coronavirus challenge with courage and zeal. The early results of those efforts attest to the continued high quality of Catholic education.



From the Office of the  
Director of  
Technology, K-12

## Technology Takes a Leading Role in AOP Schools Response to COVID-19

The Technology Department in the Office of Catholic Education has been working continuously to support our school administrators, teachers, students and parents since the initial announcement that schools would transition to a flexible instruction model in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In preparation for this possible shift, the team had previously established a resource page on its website, which is being updated regularly with a variety of materials. You can find the resources here <https://www.aoptech.org/e-learning-resources.html>.

During the first full week of flexible instruction, the Technology Department has been providing daily and personalized assistance to teachers and administrators. To ease the communication process and to track needs, the department established a professional development request form that is universal. This form will help provide data regarding the continued needs of our teachers in their efforts to meet student learning needs. The technology team will be able to formulate future professional development opportunities utilizing the data provided.

In all, the first week of flexible instruction has been widely embraced! Follow @aoptech @aops schools and the hashtag #aoptech across all social media platforms to see examples of students engaging in the flexible model of instruction.