



PITTSBURGH CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

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Dear Catholic School Community,

Every September administrators across the country write letters to welcome families back to the new school year. This year, the simple greeting of “welcome back to school” takes on a whole new meaning. The classrooms of fall 2020 hardly resemble the classrooms of years gone by. Teachers prepared for social distancing by clearing their rooms and spacing desks far apart. Gyms and cafeterias in many schools have been turned into classrooms to accommodate the new safety guidelines. All our teachers worked through the summer to advance their virtual teaching skills. Their summer conversations centered on face coverings, social distancing, ventilation, and COVID-19 protocols. Families prepared differently as they decided whether to send students in to school or keep them home to learn virtually. No matter which option chosen, please be assured of the commitment of diocesan teachers and administrators to partner with you to create the best possible learning experiences rooted in academic excellence and faith.

I offer a special welcome to the students who have chosen to begin the school year online! We hope you are excited and ready to begin the 2020-21 school year. For the families with students working virtually, please pay close attention to your school’s attendance policies for online instruction.

The cornerstone of Catholic education is the shared commitment that we have to do the absolute best for our children and young adults as we live out our faith in our schools. This partnership is critical as we return to the classrooms this year. The classroom may be virtual, in person, or both as in our hybrid model. All require open communication, compassion, and patience during these challenging times to give us the best hope for keeping our programs flourishing in the weeks and months ahead. I believe that God is calling us to model living through adversity for our children and young adults.

School operations this year could be pivoting rapidly depending upon variables out of our control, so please plan for and expect situations that require quick shifts between models. We will likely have quarantine situations, and school families should prepare for emergency childcare if a student needs to remain home for a period of time. The hope is that the health and safety measures that we are implementing will mitigate the need for numerous quarantines. Having said that, we are relying on our

entire school community to take precautions outside of the school day as well. Please ask these questions **before** sending students to school:

- Has my child had a fever as defined by the CDC during the past 24 hours?
- Has my child had a new or unexpected cough during the past 7 days?
- Has my child been around anyone exhibiting these symptoms within the past 14 days?
- Is my child living with anyone who has been sick, has exhibited symptoms of COVID-19, or is currently under quarantine for exposure to COVID-19?
- Has my child traveled internationally within the last 14 days?
- Has my child traveled to a state identified by the PA Department of Health as having high amounts of COVID-19 cases in the last 14 days?
- Has my child disregarded CDC guidelines and failed to limit his/her exposure to COVID-19?

In addition, please alert your school administrator if your student is exposed or tested for COVID-19. This notification allows them to best serve the entire school community. Please note that names are kept confidential, but notice must be given to the school community as defined by our health and safety plans. I encourage you to refer back frequently to the Memorandum of Understanding you signed as part of your school paperwork.

As we continue on this journey through uncharted waters, I ask that we remember that we are Church, we are the Body of Christ. Please let us treat each other with compassion, patience, and most of all love. Let us demonstrate through our words and actions that we are faithfully committed to our primary mission – to love and serve Jesus Christ and each other.

Please pray with us and for us as we begin this new school. Let us live the words from our Gospel passage on Sunday, “Again, amen, I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am in the midst of them.” (Matthew 18: 19-20)

Welcome back to school!!

May God bless you and comfort you with His peace.



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