



OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW YORK

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MR. MICHAEL J. DEEGAN, SUPERINTENDENT

August 13, 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians,

It is with great anticipation that we look forward to the safe reopening of our school buildings in September. In a time when words like uncertainty and change have dominated our lexicon, seeing a return to some form of routine - especially for children- is a great comfort to us all.

You were recently shown a video ([click here](#)) providing an overview of the practices and protocols you can expect to see in schools throughout the archdiocese this fall, which will ensure the teachers' and students' safe return to our buildings. In addition to these measures, the initial re-entry and subsequent day-to-day monitoring of COVID-related issues will be overseen by the Catholic Schools COVID Coordination Team, which will include a noted expert in the field of public health. The team, overseen by The Health and Safety Task Force of the Office of the Superintendent of Schools, will be supported by a full-time staff dedicated to the health and safety of our students and staff who will monitor and manage our response to COVID-19. They will take the lead in interfacing with local health officials, including the crucial tasks of testing, contact tracing, school notifications any time a school experiences a suspected or confirmed case within the building.

While we are very proud of how our school leaders and teachers shifted to home-based learning overnight, we can all agree the ideal environment for students to pray, learn and grow is within the walls, halls and classrooms of our beloved schools. In many cases, this year, that will mean a hybrid model of in-person and enhanced, remote synchronized and a-synchronized education.

Teachers will be expected to utilize Zoom throughout the school day to engage your children when they are at home, providing the classroom experience of teaching, learning and practice of concepts. Since this technology is new, we have dedicated additional days of professional development for our teachers at the start of school. We anticipate that the first few days will find students, teachers and principals addressing and refining whatever fine tuning will be necessary.

Given the expanse of our regions and the unique physical characteristics of each school building, our gifted and talented principals have tailored the [Catholic Schools Reopening: Moving Forward Together](#) guidelines and manual to best serve the needs of their communities. Recognizing that principals have been keeping you informed since March and more recently with the release of our opening plan, in accordance with the governor's new directives, principals will begin additional outreach to parents in the coming days. These communications will outline daily procedures specific to your school, such as but not limited to: pick up and drop off, meal times, maintenance of facilities, and daily screening procedures. Over the course of the coming weeks, you will have the opportunity to communicate with your principal. We are all blessed to have these dedicated school leaders. This series of communications will culminate in a virtual, interactive meeting to ensure you and your family are as comfortable as possible with the specific reopening plan in place.

As you learn more about the specifics relating to your individual schools, now is an ideal time to contemplate a discussion with your child about what they should expect as school reopens. While they likely have a favorite mask, and they certainly know how to sing two soapy choruses of Happy Birthday at the sink, it will be important for them to know how to implement the best hygiene practices they are already performing within the context of the school day. [We have added resources on our website to help you prepare them for wearing a mask throughout the](#)

[day at school.](#)

Perhaps even more importantly, this will likely be the first time the children will have seen so many of their friends in person since March. Given they will be wearing face coverings and won't have the usual physical contact or freedom of movement, there are conversations that can be started now addressing the social and emotional aspects of coming back to school in a COVID environment. The mental health professionals at the Archdiocese Drug and Alcohol Prevention Program (ADAPP) have prepared [resources for this purpose](#), and we invite you to utilize them as you see fit.

As evidenced by all of the above, much planning and study has been committed –and will continue- towards safely reopening our school buildings and delivering the academically superior education of which we are all so proud. Ultimately, the people in whose hands these plans will rest, are the dedicated men and women who constitute the finest group of teachers in America today. These selfless, persevering professional educators have met every challenge placed before them and have exceeded expectations throughout the COVID-19 crisis, and we know they will continue to be there for your children in that sacred singular relationship that only exists between a student and their teacher. Not only are they your child's hero, they are ours as well.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael J. Deegan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Michael J. Deegan
Superintendent of Schools
Archdiocese of New York

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