



**ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY FOR ELEMENTARY EDUCATION**

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November 6, 2020

Dear Parents,

Today I write to update you on the COVID conditions within our 102 elementary schools. After being open for 10 weeks, we have seen very few cases in our schools. There have been a few isolated cases in which two schools had to go fully virtual for a short period of time. However, our other schools have not seen any cases. Again, I thank you for your diligence in following our policies and making this possible.

The PA Department of Education has developed a metric based on the positivity rate of COVID per county to make recommendations based on the level of full in-person instruction that schools should implement. We have had two counties reach this level (Philadelphia and Delaware). When this level was reached, a conversation with the Department of Health provided the recommendation that we should not switch to all virtual learning. They cited the extremely low rate of positive cases in our schools as the reason. They felt that the students were safer in our schools, in a controlled environment, in which such strong protective measures are in place, rather than in a virtual learning setting.

It is our goal to remain in our current instructional model, offering full virtual and full in-person instruction for as long as we can. I would also like to let you know that if required to go fully virtual we are ready. Although we were proud of how quickly we went to full virtual last Spring, we spent a great deal of time this summer looking at ways we could enhance our full virtual learning practices. It is our recommendation to schools to provide a full day of virtual instruction each day if we move to virtual learning. You can see the full recommendations at <https://aopcatschools.org/cso-virtual-learning-cohort-instruction/>.

However, it is possible that in some communities we may be forced to go fully virtual if the COVID spread continues to increase in that community. The time we are fully virtual will not be as indefinite as it was last spring. There are clear metrics in place that will allow us to return to full in-person instruction after certain metrics are met. I have also asked our schools to prepare for the possibility of going fully virtual so we are ready. This decision will not be made for the entire Archdiocese. It will be made on a community by community basis.

Let me close by saying that at this time we are **not** going fully virtual. We plan to stay in our current model as long as permitted. As new information is available, we will update you. Again, thank you for all your support during these times.

Yours in Christ,

Andrew M. McLaughlin, Ed. D.