



March 12, 2020

Dear School Families, PREP Families, and Staff,

In an ongoing effort to provide information on the efforts on the part of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and your school to provide for the ongoing health, welfare, and safety of every student, teacher, and staff member in light of ongoing concerns about coronavirus (COVID-19).

The wellbeing of all those in our elementary, secondary, and special education schools remains our top priority, especially during the current public health challenge. As you know, we have implemented a number of practices out of an abundance of caution based on guidelines set forth by the Centers for Diseases Control (CDC) and the Pennsylvania Department of Health. We also promised to share key updates regarding COVID-19 developments.

This afternoon Governor Wolf announced that all schools in Montgomery County would be closed as part of an effort to prevent the further spread of COVID-19. We learned this information when it was shared by the governor at his news conference.

He shared that those closures were effective immediately through Friday, March 27th. We are complying with these directives in our elementary, secondary, and schools of special education as well as our parish religious education programs. We will continue to monitor developments and directives from the Commonwealth regarding a date when schools in Montgomery County will reopen.

We have been preparing for an occurrence of this nature and have been working with administrators and faculty members to assist them in developing flexible instruction plans for use in the event of a mandated closure. Those flexible instruction plans will now be enacted and are designed to provide for the continued education of your children during this period. As those plans are unique to each school, additional information will be forthcoming from local school administration.

The Archdiocese is aware that some students residing in Montgomery County attend school in a neighboring county. The parents of these students may elect to keep their child at home and they will receive flexible instruction and will receive an excused absence. We also take this opportunity to remind them that bus transportation provided by any Montgomery County school district may be suspended and may be unavailable to them. Any student who is unable to attend school due to a transportation related difficulty will be provided with an excused absence.

In addition, and out of an abundance of caution, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia has made the decision to suspend all extra-curricular and co-curricular activities including retreats, athletic events both on and off school grounds, field trips, and social events planned by elementary, secondary, and special education schools throughout the entire five-county Archdiocese. That suspension of activities will last through Friday, March 27th. This decision will be further evaluated pending future developments.

We also take this opportunity to provide some general reminders for the benefit of school families throughout the five-county region.

- Students, families, employees, and volunteers should avoid travelling to countries where the CDC has issued a Level 3 travel notice. These countries may be found on the CDC travel website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>

- Individuals returning from a country with a Level 3 Travel Notice are required to remain home for 14 days following their re-entry to the United States. According to the CDC, the incubation period for coronavirus spans 2 to 14 days. If these individuals are virus free after 14 days, they may return to school. Individuals exhibiting signs of ill health during the 14-day in home period is required to seek immediate medical attention.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Cover any coughs or sneezes with your elbow, do not use your hands!
- Clean surfaces frequently, such as countertops, light switches, cell phones and other frequently touched areas.
- Contain- if you are sick, stay home until you are feeling better.
- Children who suffer from auto-immune deficiencies or other maladies that make them susceptible to illness are permitted to remain home at the discretion of their parents. All such absences will be excused.

We will continue to monitor the CDC recommendations as well as directives from governmental agencies and adjust policies accordingly. Please use the link below for additional information. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

This time is a challenging one for all of us. Our primary goal will remain to provide for the health and safety of all those entrusted to our care. The Office of Catholic Education has set up a dedicated point of contact where parents can share their questions and concerns. Messages may be sent to covid19@archphila-oce.org. Be assured of our continued prayers for all those affected by this virus.

Sincerely in Christ,

Sister Maureen L. McDermott, IHM, Ph.D.
Superintendent for Secondary Schools

Andrew McLaughlin, Ed.D.
Superintendent for Elementary Schools

Ann Menna
Deputy Secretary for Catechetical Formation