



PITTSBURGH CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

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Dear Catholic School Families,

The end of the school year has certainly been an unusual one. I had the privilege of viewing some high school, eighth grade and kindergarten graduations. While it is not the same as being in our schools and churches with all of you, these events were very moving and well done. I hope to pop in on more events this week. Now that most instruction has concluded for the year, we will be working diligently through the summer to prepare school programs for whatever we will encounter in the fall.

Governor Wolf said yesterday that there is no question that schools will reopen in the fall. The Pennsylvania Department of Education will release guidelines next week to address precautionary measures to safely have students and teachers back in our buildings. Our teachers, administrators, and schools office are working together to plan for all the possibilities. We want our students back in their chairs in August! We are so committed to this that we are adopting a campaign motto "Pittsburgh Catholic Schools: Lighting the Way". Our teachers did a brilliant job responding to the Covid-19 crisis and I believe they did light the way then, and will continue to do so. All of our teachers and administrators are invited to attend weekly virtual meetings throughout the summer, where they will receive updates, ask questions, provide input on school related topics, and have opportunities to hear from experts about strategies for multiple instructional platforms.

In addition, a website was created with a bank of resources for our families over the summer. Summer learning opportunities have the potential to help children and youth improve their academic outcomes. We hope this website provides opportunities to ease the summer slide, enhance self-confidence, and encourage personal growth for our students. Those resources and others are available to you through the Schools area of the diocesan website. We invite you to click the link and take a look: <https://diopitt.org/schools>

With respect to our teachers and their contracts, we had to take the administrative action of issuing teacher contract notification letters. In a show of unity and support for Catholic education, each one of our elementary school principals sent their teachers letters notifying them of a need to pause before completing any contracts for the new school year. Failure to meet a May 31st deadline for notification would have placed financial penalties on our schools. No one can afford to use precious resources to pay penalties. Covid-19 changed so much for all of us, and we are taking time to figure out staffing needs for the fall.

Just as the spring was not a typical school spring, this summer will not be typical either. On Monday, we begin the summer long work of preparing for the fall. Our hearts are burning for Catholic education! Seeing the beautiful faces of your children in video events, just reminds me even more of the importance of schools where Jesus Christ is the center of each day. We do not know exactly what our school days will look like in the fall or how our buildings will have to adapt, but this will become clear over time. However, we **do know** a few things:

- We love our students and families!
- We will continue to work together to provide accessible, affordable, Catholic education for the children in the Diocese of Pittsburgh.
- Catholic education is precious to us and to the greater society. Our graduates go on to serve their fellow human beings in the spirit of Christ.

So now I turn to you, our parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and all members of our school communities. Will you help us? Will you do as I have asked our teachers and remain positively engaged, so all our efforts can be directed toward our work for the fall?

To be forthright, life is uncertain right now. Before Covid-19, we had an artificial sense that we control our days and our futures. Through this pandemic with the death, loss, financial distress that it wrought, it reminds those of faith to put their full trust in God. I read, that in scripture, some form of "Be not afraid" is referenced 365 times. I have to believe that God must really want us to know that.

So, I leave you with this: we are working to have schools ready for your children in the fall, but you must be in this with us. Please register your children and commit to a Catholic School future. Together, we will show a world that needs hope, that our Pittsburgh Catholic Schools are Lighting the Way.

God bless you,
Michelle

