



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH NEWS

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Diocese of Pittsburgh Schools Revise Reopening Plans *Later start date gives elementary teachers more time to prepare*

The Diocese of Pittsburgh's Schools Office, regional administrators, and school principals have decided to move the official start of school for elementary schools to September 8, 2020. The move is in response to teachers who requested more time to implement all COVID-19 health and safety reopening protocols.

High Schools in the diocese remain on their original opening schedules.

"We've had weekly communication with our principals, teachers, and regional boards throughout the summer preparing for this very different school year," said Director of Catholic Schools, Michelle Peduto. "The reality is, we have been planning for something that nobody has all the answers for at the moment. We are aware that this is a time for us to be patient, open-minded, and flexible to adapt to the needs of our teachers and school families. Reopening safely is truly a team effort."

Teachers wanted more time to prepare their classrooms, practice the new protocols, test systems for distance learning, and have in-service days for health and safety training to incorporate into their new daily routines.

"I see it as an issue of wellbeing for our staff," Peduto said. "We want to make sure everyone feels comfortable, confident, and supported as we welcome our students back to school."

Schools are separate entities in the education structure in the Diocese of Pittsburgh. Each school received diocesan guidelines for reopening which reflected safe practices outlined in local, state, and federal health directives. Individual schools then created implementation plans based on unique considerations of their building space, staff, and student enrollment. Those plans were then submitted to the diocesan schools office for review and approval.

Each school has shared their reopening plans with school families, with an awareness that more changes could come. "We have in-person, distance learning, and hybrid plans in place to deliver quality Catholic education to our students and families," said Peduto.

The diocese has been monitoring guidelines and directives involving school athletics, as well. Based on Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf's strong recommendations on August 6, 2020, Catholic schools and parishes in the Diocese of Pittsburgh are to limit sports participation to practicing/conditioning in sports-specific cohorts with no travel to, or competition with outside teams under the previously established "Athletics

Health and Safety Plan.” Programs are to be in full compliance with local, state, and federal guidelines and orders in an effort to avoid the outright cancellation of sports.

“Although this school year incorporates many changes in response to the pandemic, one thing remains the same: our love of providing Catholic education to children. We keep our school families and the community in our prayers as we move closer to reopening,” Peduto said.