



DIocese OF BELLEVILLE

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

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Dear School Families,

I write you today to share with you some good news about our plans to return to in person instruction this fall. The Diocese of Belleville, in conjunction with the other five Diocese in Illinois, health care professionals, teachers, parents, and administrators, has compiled a list of guidelines and recommendations for all of our schools. Due to enrollment numbers, structure of schedules, number of teachers, building size and several other factors it is impossible to provide specific instructions that are appropriate for all locations. Therefore, each school location will complete a *Reopening of Schools' Template* with specific details of how each area of the *Guidelines for Reopening Schools* will be achieved. Any restrictions or changes will be age appropriate, educationally motivated, and with the health of all members involved. Each template will then be submitted to the Office of Education for final approval or recommendations on any needed adjustments.

It is important that each family and employee in the Diocese know that the overall health and safety of everyone involved in our school communities are our first priority. It is also important to understand that it is best for the long-term development of our students to continue their education in an in person setting. While the responses about the distance learning experience of our families were overwhelmingly positive, it is also apparent that a safe in-person experience is also preferred. Please be patient with the principal at your location as they work with their teams and others to find solutions that allow for a safe and educationally sound return.

Lastly, opinions and feelings about COVID 19 and the appropriate actions to take moving forward vary widely. It will be essential that everyone is respectful of those varied opinions and follow the guidelines and policies at each location. Some of our staff members/students may have pre-existing conditions or live with someone who is at a higher risk of having serious issues if infected. Therefore, each school family has a responsibility to the other members of that family to do their part to minimize the likelihood of the spread of infection. Each school and the Diocese will do our part to keep students and families safe while providing an in-person experience, but we must have the support of each family to work with us to accomplish this goal.

As always thank you for your continued support of our Catholic Schools and for partnering with us in the education of your children. Prayers for a successful and safe 2020/2021 school year.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Birdsong

Jonathan Birdsong
Superintendent of Schools
Diocese of Belleville