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July 16, 2020

Dear Parents,

Thank you for your ongoing support of and commitment to Our Lady's School as we navigate the constantly changing realities within our school, community, state, and nation. We hope that you and all your loved ones are currently safe and healthy. Our prayers and support are with you now more than ever, and we ask for your ongoing prayers as we navigate what continues to be an uncertain future.



From the moment our schools were closed statewide back in March, it has been important that Immaculate Conception Catholic School remain a beacon of hope to the students entrusted to our care. We can't thank enough our ICCS staff and our families for their extreme sacrifices as we worked together during Our Lady's Online Learning Community this spring. Even during this time of unprecedented uncertainty, we saw amazing ingenuity and creativity from students, teachers, and staff alike that brought spirit and life to our virtual classrooms. We also were able to see virtual attendance rates and student engagement well above other schools. We are confident that we were able to achieve solid spiritual and academic progress as we kept our eyes focused on Jesus and Heaven.

Because of the tremendous amount of student engagement during the distance learning time, we are going to begin the school year with standard grade level work, providing additional support as needed. We will do a formative assessment at the beginning of the year to determine how the student is performing, and we will form instruction based on that assessment and how well the student met the benchmarks required.

We've been in constant communication with local and state officials. As of this week, the state has provided some clarity based on rapidly changing circumstances. As we continue to see changing restrictions in the Denton area and throughout Texas, we want to continue to be that message of hope and share with you our latest thinking on the realities of the fall and the start of school. We miss our students so very much!!

First, we remain committed to following the advice of experts throughout this process. None of the guidelines we are working from are self-generated; we are relying on the guidance and expertise of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Texas Education Agency, agencies such as the American Academy of Pediatrics and our own Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops Education Department and the Diocese of Fort Worth. Second, we have tremendous trust in our local school leaders' ability to determine the best practical applications of guidelines for their campuses, and we will continue to collaborate with them in terms of day-to-day decisions.

We are approaching all of this from a perspective of safety and need, and we are acknowledging that campus layouts, resources and numbers of students will affect what is possible and what is prudent on our campus. It is important to note that we will continue to respond to guidance from federal, state, and local governments as well as our diocese, so all of this planning is based on the best information that we have today.

As of now, based on guidance from the agencies listed above and in working very closely with Immaculate Conception Catholic Parish as one of its critical ministries, we plan to open ICCS in person in the fall and maintain a robust system of monitoring and response. Our plans to meet these guidelines are based around four foundations: monitoring and responding to student and faculty health; limiting and eliminating unnecessary or risky activities; revising cleaning and disinfection protocols; and finally, having additional blended learning and virtual learning options available for planned or unplanned shutdowns.

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Our school and parish facilities will have consistent requirements to achieve a safe environment. Specifically:

- All students and faculty members will be screened daily for signs of illness;
- Students and faculty members will be required to stay home per standard protocol following an illness;
- Campus access will be restricted; Any meeting, gathering, etc. that can be held virtually will be scheduled. This will include things like Meet the Teacher Night, Parent-Teacher Conferences, Advisory Council meetings, etc., until we receive clarity that it is safe to have in-person gatherings.
- Face coverings will be required for all employees;
- Face coverings will be required for age-appropriate student populations per ongoing requirements and the Governor's directive;
- Interactions and movement of students within the campus will be limited to better control contact;
- We will be aggressive ongoing monitoring of this fluid situation and will be prepared to make changes in the teaching and learning process based on best practices as circumstances warrant.

We have received calls in the office asking about tuition and reduced rates should we have a hybrid or remote learning plan in place. As a non-profit entity, Catholic schools are dependent upon tuition to meet their contractual obligations for salaries and benefits of staff as well as balance their budgets. Our school does not charge the actual cost to educate a student (a \$2500 per student gap for 19-20); therefore, every tuition dollar and fundraising dollar matters to help us maintain operational vitality of our Catholic school. Please understand that a reduced rate for tuition is not financially a possibility for our school. Families needing tuition assistance are encouraged to apply through FACTS.

We are honored to partner with you as parents here at Our Lady's School as we transform learning for our students and continue to provide an unapologetically Catholic education that is rigorous and relevant to today's learning and steeped in a Catholic worldview. We look forward to hearing from you as you return to your schools and remain committed to Catholic education.

We are putting plans into place so that you will have final procedures as soon as we can get them to you based on local, state, and federal directives and diocesan approval. In the meantime, we are constantly planning as we continue to share best practices and to give specifics in terms of screening guidelines for our local campus plan. We remain incredibly grateful to you and all of our staff here at Our Lady's School who maintain our commitment to a Christ-centered education through our Catholic schools. May we continue to hold each other in prayer, and we hope to see you soon.

*Father Tim Thompson*

Father Tim Thompson, Pastor  
Immaculate Conception Parish

*Elaine Schad*

Elaine Schad, Principal  
Immaculate Conception Catholic School