



Catholic Education Coronavirus Taskforce Newsletter

August 7, 2020

A Prayer Amid a Pandemic

Jesus Christ, you traveled through towns and villages “curing every disease and illness.” At your command, the sick were made well. Come to our aid now, in the midst of the global spread of the coronavirus, that we may experience your healing love.

Heal those who are sick with the virus. May they regain their strength and health through quality medical care.

Heal us from our fear, which prevents nations from working together and neighbors from helping one another.

Heal us from our pride, which can make us claim invulnerability to a disease that knows no borders.

Jesus Christ, healer of all, stay by our side in this time of uncertainty and sorrow. Be with those who have died from the virus. May they be at rest with you in your eternal peace.

Be with the families of those who are sick or have died. As they worry and grieve, defend them from illness and despair. May they know your peace.

Be with the doctors, nurses, researchers and all medical professionals who seek to heal and help those affected and who put themselves at risk in the process. May they know your protection and peace.

Be with the leaders of all nations. Give them the foresight to act with charity and true concern for the well-being of the people they are meant to serve. Give them the wisdom to invest in long-term solutions that will help prepare for or prevent future outbreaks. May they know your peace, as they work together to achieve it on earth.

Whether we are home or abroad, surrounded by many people suffering from this illness or only a few, Jesus Christ, stay with us as we endure and mourn, persist and prepare. In place of our anxiety, give us your peace.

Jesus Christ, heal us.

By Kerry Weber, an Executive Editor of *America*. First published in the March 30, 2020 issue.



From the Office of the
Secretary of Elementary
Education

Catholic Schools Onward

Shortly after the school year ended, Dr. Andrew McLaughlin, Secretary for Elementary Education, initiated the Catholic Schools Onward (CSO) Taskforce to create a plan for the safe re-opening of our elementary schools. Principals, business leaders, Board of Limited Jurisdiction members, health care professionals, and parents along with administrators from the Office of Catholic Education (OCE) met weekly to write a plan to assist the schools in safely opening. The plan may be viewed at <https://aopcatholicschools.org/catholic-schools-onward-cso-2/> The taskforce utilized recommendations from the CDC, Board of Health, and government leaders. As a result, nine key areas were developed after the introduction and philosophy. They include:

1. General Principals
2. Catholic Identity
3. Building Operations
4. Classroom Operations
5. Virtual Learning
6. CARES/Early Childhood
7. Playbook – what to do if someone gets COVID
8. Student Mental Health and Whole Health
9. After School Activities



The initial document was shared with elementary principals on July 10, 2020. They were asked to take it and create a plan for their individual school that would in turn be shared with their school community. Many schools created their own taskforce that discussed items such as arrival and dismissal, cleaning, and how to move about the building. The 102 schools in the Archdiocese took the recommendations and wrote their plan according to what would be best for their local school.

The plan differs from some of the school districts in asking parents to choose between a five day in school classes or a 100% virtual model. There are a few schools that, for various reasons, chose a slightly different approach. For the in-school classes, students will remain with a cohort or homeroom of students throughout the day. Special teachers will come into the room for instruction. The goal is to limit the exposure of students to one another.

It is believed that the CSO provides a safe learning environment. The American Academy of Pediatrics as well as many health officials, and government agencies recommend face to face instruction. Our younger students are unable to stay at home without supervision and being in a safe physical environment lessens the stress on children. The plan differs from the high school hybrid model because of the age of the students.

The majority of our parents have been very supportive of the plan to move to in person learning with the biggest issue being the wearing of masks throughout the day. The decision to wear masks will be taken directly from the most current CDC and PA government guidelines.

Our schools and classrooms will look different in the fall with desks facing the same direction spaced as far apart as possible. Good hygiene will be encouraged throughout the day. Cleaning will become a priority. Students, faculty, and staff will have their health monitored and asked to stay home if they are

not feeling well. With all the safeguards in place, Catholic Education will continue to offer a quality education steeped in the Mission of Jesus Christ.

Online Student Behavior

Spring of 2020 launched a new normal for everyone in the world. The corona virus brought new vocabulary such as social distancing and new necessary products such as facial masks and PPE gear. Online learning took place throughout the United States presenting a challenge to both teachers and students who experienced it for the first time. Below we have listed ways to enhance your child/ren's learning experience. How many are you able to implement with your child? The more the child is able to do, the more your child will be engaged in the online learning process.



- Students are expected to show up on time. A good practice would be to log on five minutes prior to the start of the session.
- Students should be respectful in speaking and writing.
- Students must use correct names and appropriate backgrounds.
- Students remain active, engaged, and visible. They should stay on mute and click the raise hand button to participate and to ask a question.
- Appropriate attire must be worn. Consider having the student dress in the school uniform.
- Students should find a quiet space in the home free of distractions such as siblings, pets, and TV. They should sit up in a chair, at a desk or table (not in bed)
- Adhere to face-to-face policies (not on cell phones, etc) Students should remain visible at all times to promote focus and eye contact should be maintained.
- Students may not share Zoom, Google Meet invites.
- Students may only attend their own classes.
- Students should refrain from chewing gum, eating, and drinking in front of the camera.

Did You Know?

Did you know that Philadelphia was hit especially hard in the Influenza Epidemic of 1918? In 1918, Philadelphia had a population of 2 million and 25% of the people contracted the flu resulting in 16,000 deaths. Why is that significant? Only one parish in the Archdiocese survived without a single death and that parish was St. Peter the Apostle at 5th and Girard. What did they do differently from everyone else? St. Peter the Apostle Parish houses the Shrine of St. John Neumann. The people of the parish prayed to St. John Neumann and they believe St. John Neumann saved their parish. So much so that they built a chapel in his honor. Consider making a family pilgrimage to the shrine and view the body of St. John Neumann in the altar. Visit the museum and stay for the noon daily Mass. While there, please say a prayer for all of us: [St. John Neumann intercede for us during this coronavirus crises.](#)



From the Office of the
Superintendent of Secondary
Schools and Schools of Special
Education

Looking Ahead to the New School Year



Summer is quickly passing and the new school year is only a few weeks away. In July, the Archdiocesan plan for a return to in person learning, [*Catholic High Schools Compass: Continuing Excellence in Catholic Education*](#), was introduced with its four directional principles:

- Safety
- Academic Excellence
- Technology
- Faith Formation

Throughout the summer, the administrators, faculty and staff of our high schools have worked to prepare for the safe return to in person learning in September using these principles as their guide. Each school is completing a state mandated operations plan following the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) guidelines. You will be able to review the plans on your child's school website within the next week. In addition, each school has an appointed Pandemic Coordinator and Pandemic Response Team to continue to support the implementation of safety guidelines and to facilitate issues that may arise.

Key to every plan, to safely reopen schools are enhanced cleaning protocols in accordance with recommendations from the CDC. Each school has already undergone a deep cleaning. Once classes resume, greatly enhanced cleaning and sanitation will be performed during the school day with deeper cleaning each night. Electrostatic disinfecting equipment has been purchased for each school so that schools can regularly disinfect surfaces at the end of each school day. Additionally, materials will be available in each classroom and office for individual cleaning of surfaces.

Maintaining academic excellence while instituting proper safety protocols is of highest priority as plans are developed. To ensure the safety of teachers, students and staff in classrooms and in public spaces, face coverings will be required in accordance with PDE guidelines. To allow for proper social distancing all schools will operate with a hybrid instructional model utilizing an every other day cycle, which has been termed an A/B cycle. Students will remain rostered for their normal school day schedule and participate in class in real time every day, allowing for a full year of complete instruction. Under this model, students will be assigned to an A or B group.



While the A group students are present in the building, students in the B group will participate in each class live through a new Learning Management System (LMS) and a video conferencing system, both of which are explained on the next page. On the following school day, students in the B group will be present in the school building while students in the A group learn from

home. This type of synchronous learning means that students are receiving direct, real time instruction whether in the school building or at home.

Cameras and sound equipment will be installed in classrooms throughout our 17 high schools as soon as they are delivered. All classes will be live streamed through Zoom education accounts. This capability provides for the synchronistic learning on days when students are not scheduled to be

physically present in the school building. Most importantly, students learning from home will not only be able to view classes live, but they will also be able to participate in all class activities. As a result, there will be seamless educational integration between A and B cycle days.

In the coming weeks, we will continue to move forward with our plans to provide the excellent educational experiences that are the hallmark of our schools while keeping the health and safety of our students, their families, our faculties, administrators and staff at the forefront in all we do. Thank you for your continued support and prayers throughout this time. Know that you and your families remain in our thoughts and prayers each day.

A Message from the Office of
the Interim Director of the
Schools of Special Education

Schools of Special Education: Planning for the Reopening of Schools

Dear Schools of Special Education Families,

My name is Dr. Anthony Irvin. I am serving as the Interim Director for the Schools of Special Education. Since my appointment in early June of 2020, I have supported the work of special education teachers and administrators. I also serve as the Director of Urban Education for the Office of Catholic Education under the direction of Sister Maureen McDermott, our Superintendent of Secondary Schools. The following message serves a brief guide for the reopening of schools for the fall of 2020.

The three schools of special education St. Katherine's, Our Lady of Confidence and St. Lucy's successfully completed the 2019-2020 school for their students. While COVID-19 Pandemic forced all area schools into virtual learning modes for instruction, it should be noted that all Archdiocesan teachers, assistants, office staff and principals continued to provide instruction as well as to connect with parents and students via phone as well as through the PowerSchool and Google Classroom systems. Students and their families are commended for their engagement during this very difficult period.

Since late June 2020, school principals have been engaged in school re-opening planning and their state mandated plans will outline information for safety and health procedures, mask and facial coverings, social distancing, school cleaning, transportation schedules for arrival and dismissal, school lunches, water and snacks. Please check your son or daughter's school website for more specific information as it develops during the month of August 2020.

Our Lady of Confidence: <http://ourladyofconfidence.org/>
St. Katherine's: <http://stkatherinedayschool.org/>
St. Lucy's: <http://stl.ocephila.org/>



Frequently Asked Questions

Additionally, here are some general Frequently Asked Questions or FAQ's that will also help with informing parents about the safety and operational guidelines:

- Will Instruction occur each day of the week?

Yes, students will report to school each day for instruction. Arrival times and dismissal times will be communicated by the local school.

- What personal protection equipment will be required of students?

Students will be required to wear masks or shields when transitioning in the hall-- from buses, bathrooms, therapies, and recess. Staff will be provided a face shield to wear all day long but can use a mask when needed or preferred. Every student will have a three-panel sneeze guard stationed on their desk to allow them to take off their masks while seated. If a student moves from their desk, a face shield or mask must be on. Teachers will be supplied with no-touch thermometers, disinfecting wipes, disinfecting sprays, and disinfecting cleaners. We have engaged a cleaning service to be in school during the day to wipe down commonly touched surfaces such as doorknobs, railings, faucets, etc.

- What other classroom adjustments will be in place?

All classrooms will be set-up with student desks 6 feet apart. Each student will have a taped box around their desk, along with a bin, where all personal belongings (workbooks, pens, crayons, fidgets) will be located to prevent the need for students to leave their desks. Lunch will be eaten at their desks. High School students' lunch will be eaten in the classrooms and for the 1First-trimester students will be asked to bring their own lunch.

- Will there be additional technology used to deliver instruction?

The Google Classrooms application, Zoom video conferencing accounts and Apple iPads have already been in use. Schools are reviewing additional online tools and professional development trainings to enhance their instruction.

- How will adjustments for COVID safety with mindfulness for the specific disability of students?

Teachers will incorporate more frequent hand washing and hygiene skills into their daily schedule. Procedures will be reiterated each day by the teachers and staff. An Isolation Room is in place if any student shows symptoms of an illness. Hand sanitizer stations will be set-up in classrooms and around the schools. Students will have their temperature taken upon arrival to school and at lunch time. A space has been set apart in the event that a student or teacher needs to be quarantined.

- How will "Social or Physical Distancing" be reinforced during the school day?

Students will remain in classrooms most of their day as a cohort. Students will travel only with their cohort and utilize other areas of the school such as bathrooms, computer labs, gymnasium, and play area only with their cohort.

More COVID 19 information has been posted by the Archdiocese COVID 19 Task Force. Please click on the following link for that information. <https://aopcatholicschools.org/covid-19-information/>

If you have more specific questions about the re-opening of schools, please contact your child's school principal using the information provided above.

Please be safe.

Sincerely,

Anthony Irvin, Ed.D.

