



July 2020

Dear families,

Like many parents, I suspect, you've been anxiously awaiting news on the schools plans for the fall during these most uncertain times. As we prepare to welcome back our students and teachers, we have been working diligently to plan for every outcome. I would like to thank the staff members, and parents who have spent numerous hours this summer to assist in our Return-to-Learn planning committees. The plans will be instrumental in our learning continuum and decision making throughout the entire school year.

It remains to be our goal, and included in our daily prayers, to be together on-site for our first day of school and to remain on-site for as long as health conditions allow. Each of our schools have submitted their Return-to-Learn plans to the Iowa Department of Education, and have the plans posted on their websites. The Diocese of Des Moines Catholic Schools will continue to work with our health professionals to stay abreast to the fluidity of the virus and on implementing the best practices as they evolve. We will communicate updates on August 1<sup>st</sup>.

We are focused on accommodating physical distancing to the best of our ability and will implement extensive measures to reduce the spread of infectious disease such as strict screening and wellness policies for student and staff attendance, heightened cleaning measures, handwashing expectations, adjustments to schedules, lunch procedures, protocols for passing periods, recess, and other group activities.

We recognize there is a great deal of anxiousness surrounding specific health and safety measures to be implemented this fall. To assist in this critical component of our planning with building administrators, we established a medical advisory team of local healthcare providers who are vested in the Diocese of Des Moines Catholic schools. With the team's guidance and in conjunction with state and local public health officials, we will solidify decisions related to COVID-19 and best practices surrounding infectious disease control. We will institute measures that allow our teachers, staff, and students to engage in on-site learning in a safe environment. You can expect to learn more about the specific health and safety measures, including plans for the use of personal protective equipment in our August 1<sup>st</sup> correspondence.

The American Academy of Pediatric promotes on-site learning: <https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/>

**Have you ever considered becoming a substitute teacher?** As you may imagine, we anticipate a potential higher need for substitute teachers this year. To help meet this need, we are asking community members that hold a Bachelor's degree to consider to be trained to fulfill the requirements of a substitute teacher or reach out to someone you may know that may have interest. If you are interested in helping out your school please contact the school administrator.

We know there is more you are waiting to learn but hope this will help to begin establishing expectations and preparedness for the coming school year. We will continue to share updates and adjustments to plans.

Thank you, and God bless you and your family.

*Donna Bishop*

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