



# DIOCESE OF DALLAS

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## CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE

May 22, 2020

Dear Parents –

I want to thank you for your attention, partnership and patience over the last few months as we have all navigated the constantly changing realities within our community and our schools. I hope that you and all your loved ones are currently safe and healthy. I also want you to know that our prayers and support are with you now more than ever – we know that all families have been affected by job loss, stress, worry, and a general sense of uncertainty about the future.

From the beginning of this period, it has been important to me that our schools serve as resources of hope, and that we could continue to provide formation for the Saints and Scholars that have been entrusted to our care. Now that we are seeing changing restrictions in Dallas 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.

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 and our own Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops Education Department. 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 rely on their judgement 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 each campus. However, we do have a number of things that will be required at all campuses, and I want to share those with you so that you can have an expectation of what school will look like in the fall.

It is important to note that we will continue to respond to guidance from the Bishop, the Governor and State and local governments, so all of this planning is based on the best information that we have today. We feel confident telling you that we will not be less restrictive than what is written in this letter, but may be more restrictive based on the conditions present at the beginning of August.

As of now, based on the CDC checklist for reopening schools (you can find it [here](#)) we believe that we can open all schools 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.

While the specific logistics of these plans will be handled at the school level (and will look different based on need), we will have consistent requirements across the diocese 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 for longer periods of time following an illness;
- Visitors or volunteers will not be allowed on campuses;
- Face coverings will be required for all employees;
- Face coverings will be required for age-appropriate student populations;
- Interactions and movement of students within the campus will be limited to better control contact; and finally,
- We will be aggressive in our decisions to move to remote learning in the case that COVID-19 is detected within a community.

We will be testing, revising and finalizing the specifics of these plans throughout the summer as needs and conditions change, so you will get final procedures from your child's school near the end of summer. In the meantime, we will be meeting for additional planning sessions with all schools within the diocese to continue to share best practices and to give specifics in terms of screening guidelines and local campus plans.

We remain incredibly grateful to you and all of our teachers here in the diocese who maintained our commitment to excellence in education over the last few months, and you will remain in our thoughts and prayers as we enter into the summer break. I hope that you all find time to rest and revitalize, and we are overjoyed about being able to see you all again very soon.

Respectfully,



Matthew Vereecke