



DIOCESE OF
FORT WAYNE-SOUTH BEND
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE

Date: July 20, 2020
Re: Update on School Year 2020-2021

Dear Parents/Guardians, Administrators, Faculty, and Staff,

We believe parents are their children's first and most important teachers. Archbishop J. Michael Miller, CSB, in *The Holy See's Teaching on Catholic Schools*, indicates that most parents share the responsibility of educating their children with other individuals or institutions, mainly schools. For this reason, we invited parents/guardians, administrators, faculty, staff, and others to respond to a survey about the reopening of our schools. Results from the survey help to inform what should go into the Catholic Schools Office Back to School Plan Template (comprehensive 40-page document) that schools used to individualize their reopening plans. Parents should see those plans soon; some schools have already sent them.

We believe education is about relationships, and the model comes from the Holy Trinity. We believe that we are created in the image of God and made for relationships. We are made for communion with God and with each other in this life and the next. These relationships with God and each other are at the core of our Catholic Identity. Together, bishops, parents, and educators must make choices that promote overcoming individualistic self-promotion, solidarity instead of competition, assisting the weak instead of marginalization, and responsible participation instead of indifference-*The Holy See's Teachings on Catholic School*. Because we value relationships and community, we ask everyone to work together to support the reopening plans all of us played a part in creating. By so doing, we will give children the opportunity they need to grow in their knowledge and love of God and to develop their God-given talents so that they can glorify God and serve others.

We believe "Behold; children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward." (Psalm 127:3). This is why we must do what is best for all children when it comes to safety. For these reasons, even though every school individualized their reopening plan, the following approved policies from the Catholic Schools Office are in every school's plan.

- The goal is to reopen for in-person instruction and for schools to do their best to remain open. Additionally, schools need to plan to transition, if needed, to a hybrid (combines face-to-face classroom instruction with online activities) schedule or remote eLearning learning.
- Parents will be responsible for making sure their child(ren) conducts daily health screens and stays home if they have a fever or other symptoms of COVID-19.
- The administration, faculty, staff, and visitors will conduct or undergo daily health screens before they enter the building to ensure they do not have symptoms of COVID-19.
- Cleaning touch point surfaces will occur throughout the day and enhanced cleaning at night to disinfect for COVID-19 and other contagions.
- Hand washing and sanitizing will occur when entering and exiting the school and scheduled throughout the day.
- Our schools will social-distance six feet in the building and at extra/co-curricular events when practical.
- Every member of the school will wear a cloth face covering when entering and exiting the school, during transitions to areas within the building, and in the classroom when practical/needed as defined by the school, Catholic Schools Office, or directed by the local health department. At the discretion of the teacher, students may take their masks off when sitting in their seats and facing forward and socially distance. Students who want to keep their masks on at all times may.
- Each school will have a designated area for anyone who comes down with the symptoms of COVID-19. The school will request that the parent pick them up as soon as possible. Everyone will have to follow local health department guidelines for at-home quarantining when coming in prolonged contact with someone who has



COVID-19 or isolation for anyone who tests positive for COVID-19 as identified by the local health department or school.

- The school will readmit anyone quarantined or isolated who have followed guidelines from their local health department.

It is incumbent on all of us, in these unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic time, to give all aspects of each school's plan a try. The plans will evolve as we learn more about this coronavirus, and we will follow recommendations from each school's local health department, and any directive from The Most Reverend Kevin C. Rhoades, along with mandates from the Governor.

Please pray for a safe, in-person, reopening of our schools and that our plans will help to protect everyone, especially those at high-risk for COVID-19.

You remain in our prayers.

Sincerely,

Carl Loesch
Secretary for Catholic Education

Joseph (Joe) A. Brettnacher, Ph.D
Superintendent

Jeffrey D. Kieffer
Associate Superintendent