



DIOCESE OF
FORT WAYNE-SOUTH BEND
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE

Date: July 6, 2020
Re: School Year 2020-2021

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

Blessings to you and your family. COVID-19 and racism occupy our minds as we prepare to reopen our schools for the school year 2020-2021. We will continue to teach our students to honor the dignity of every human person because God created us in His image and likeness. Please join me in the Prayer for Life and Dignity by asking God to help us defend life and respect all people.

Eternal God, creator, and sustainer of life bless us with the courage to defend all life from conception to natural death. Bless us with the strength to respect all peoples from east to west, from north to south, so that we may truly follow the call of Jesus to be neighbor. We ask this in the name of Jesus, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit. Amen (From Being Neighbor: The Catechism and Social Justice, USCCB, April 1998)

The focus of this letter is to provide you with the progress our schools have made to reopen for in-person instruction for the school year 2020-2021. We want to share results from our imperfect survey, our progress for reopening our 43-schools and provide a timeline for when you will hear from your school about their reopening plans.

Survey Results

Although our survey in June was imperfect, it provided us with good input from parents/guardians, administrators, faculty, and staff (stakeholders) about their desires for reopening their school. As schools are deep into individualizing their reopening plans, they are using a Back-to-School Plan Template created by the Catholic Schools Office (CSO) with input from stakeholders, local health departments, national organizations, and more. On a side note, a local health department reviewed the template and indicated it was thorough and complete.

Going back to the survey results, stakeholders wanted to know details about their school's reopening plans, health screening, cleaning, handwashing, social distancing, wearing cloth face coverings, quarantining and isolation, and after an illness, reentry to school. The CSO provided the following guidelines.

- **The goal is to reopen for in-person instruction and for schools to do their best to remain open.** Additionally, they need to plan to transition, if needed, to a hybrid (combines face-to-face classroom instruction with online activities) schedule and remote (information is relayed through technology, usually at home) learning.
- **Parents** will be responsible for making sure their child(ren) conduct daily health screens and stay 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 or directed by the local health department.
- 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 the school the local health department.

Progress for Reopening our 43 Schools

The Catholic Schools Office (CSO) has worked with the Most Reverend Kevin C. Rhoades, our 43 Catholic school principals, faculty, staff, parents, departments within and outside the Diocese. We consulted with national organizations, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), local and state health departments, and universities. Also, we relied on science to develop a guidance document and reopening template to help schools create their reopening plans to protect the health and safety of their school community from contagions like COVID-19. **It is our goal to safely reopen our schools to in-person learning and do our best to keep them open.** Our 43 schools will use the Back-to-School Guidance Document and Template our committees created to individualize their reopening plans. They will account for the design of their building(s) and grounds in addition to their location with the fourteen counties within the Diocese for Fort Wayne-South Bend. Each school will work closely with their local health departments in the development of their plans. **Every school's reopening-plan will evolve due to the novelty of COVID-19 and the changing science.** Click [HERE](#) for a copy of the CSO's Protect Our Catholic Schools Plan. It will give you an understanding of the five domains (Logistics and Planning [Safety and Scheduling], Fostering Community, Curriculum and Instruction, Catholic Identity, and Technology Support) that each school is planning to cover.

Timeline

Our schools will try to get their reopening plans out to their communities by July 19, 2020.

Everyone has a role to play with COVID-19 and is responsible for the health and safety of themselves and others. Notably, we need to protect those at high risk (underlying medical conditions, individuals 65 years or older, etc.) for COVID-19. We want to thank you in advance for your ongoing patience and support. Please pray for the safety of everyone during these unprecedented times.

You remain in our thoughts and prayers.

Sincerely,



Carl Loesch
Secretary for Catholic Education



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



Jeffrey D. Kieffer
Associate Superintendent