



DIOCESE OF
FORT WAYNE-SOUTH BEND
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE

Date: May 29, 2020
Re: School Year 2020-2021

Dear Parents, Administrators, Faculty, and Staff,

By the end of next week, our schools will have finished the 2019-2020 School Year, during this unprecedented time in our lives due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, school closures, and remote-distance learning. It seems appropriate to end the year by praying to St. Rocco, who is the patron saint against plagues and infectious diseases. Our intentions include those who have died from the Pandemic, their families, and their caregivers.

O Great St. Rocco, deliver us, we beseech thee, from the scourges of God; through thy intercession, preserve our bodies from contagious diseases, and our souls from the contagion of sin. Obtain for us salubrious air, but, above all, purity of heart. Assist us in making good use of health, in bearing suffering with patience, and, after thy example, to live in the practice of penance and charity, that we may one day enjoy the happiness which thou has merited by thy virtues. St. Rocco, pray for us. (Pray three times). Amen.

We want to thank our administrators, faculty, staff, students, and parents for their hard work during school closures as we continued to educate our students in their homes. Thank you to our teachers who reinvented their teaching delivery in less than a week. We appreciate our parents, who took on increased responsibility as their home teacher and, at times, a cheerleader when the children's enthusiasm for learning lagged. With gratitude, we thank our administrators who worked tirelessly to support the teachers, students, and families. Thank you to our beloved students. They showed high resilience and flexibility in their world turned upside down. The Pandemic tested the strength of our school communities this fourth quarter. We appreciate the love and concern that everyone offered to help the children continue to learn amidst trying circumstances.

While everyone deserves a break, our office is working overtime with administrators, teachers, and staff to plan for the safe reopening (top priority) of our schools. Over 40 volunteers are members of our Back-to-School Committee. We broke up the committee into several sub-committees (e.g., Catholicity, Social-Emotional Learning, Start-Up, High Schools, Curriculum, Digital, Safety, CARES Act, and Early Childhood).

Two key dates approach, July 4, 2020 (schedule reopening date for schools per Governor Holcomb's Executive Order) and the second week in August, when many of our schools begin the 2020-2021 School Year. We desire to open traditionally (in-person) as a community of faith, under the guidelines of local, state, and national health departments. However, we have to plan for other contingencies should the spread of the coronavirus result in further school closures. The reopening of our schools requires us to prepare for three scenarios with multiple variations.

1. In-Person
2. Blended Model (half-day in-person other Distance instruction; M-W-F, T-Th, etc.)
3. Distance Learning (protect the health and safety of students, faculty, and staff)

We are meeting with several organizations. A few include the National Catholic Education Association, Indiana Nonpublic Education Association, Indiana Catholic Conference, Indiana Catholic School Consortium, Indiana High School Athletic Association, and more. Our committee is consulting with local, state, and national health departments, Catholic and public universities, and local educational and Church leaders. We want your input, too. We will follow-up with a survey within the next few days. Of course, the Most Reverend Kevin C. Rhoades is the final decision maker in consultation with our committee, and we thank him for his servant-leadership.



Since we have 43-schools, spread out over fourteen counties within the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, preparations and directives will vary because all our schools are unique. Know that we will comply with local, state, and national guidelines for schools. Guidelines include hygiene education, health checks, personal protective equipment, contact tracing, social distancing, gathering sizes, movement (students and staff), hand washing, sanitizing, cleaning, keeping athletes safe, and more. We will plan to keep you updated over the summer and work hard to address your concerns.

As a community of faith, we will continue to respond to the COVID-19 and other emergencies with collegiality and solidarity. Join us in prayer as we ask Our Lady to intercede for us during this unprecedented worldwide coronavirus. We ask her to pray for the safety of everyone as we educate our children to become disciples of Christ, fulfill their destiny to become saints, and reach their ultimate goal, heaven.

You remain in our thoughts and prayers.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Carl Loesch in black ink.

Carl Loesch
Secretary for Catholic Education

Handwritten signature of Joseph (Joe) A. Brettnacher in black ink.

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

Handwritten signature of Jeffrey D. Kieffer in black ink.

Jeffrey D. Kieffer
Associate Superintendent