



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF
ARLINGTON

Office of Catholic Schools

200 North Glebe Road, Suite 503 • Arlington, VA 22203
Office (703) 841-2519 • Fax (703) 524-8670
catholicschools@arlingtondiocese.org

May 18, 2020

Dear Parents of Our Diocesan Catholic Schools,

I pray that this letter finds you and your families in good health. The past two months have presented great challenges as all that we had come to see as the normal routines of work, school and daily life were disrupted significantly by the coronavirus. When school closures and stay-at-home orders started, we hoped it would be possible to return to a semblance of routine by the summer, but the realities of the virus continue to have a significant effect on our planning.

I know you all have questions about what will and will not happen when it is time to return to school in August and it is my intention in this letter to bring some clarity in response to those questions.

First, it is important to begin by acknowledging that Diocesan schools, like the entire Diocese, are going to follow state and local public health guidance when making decisions about whether it is safe for schools to be open.

Second, the programs our schools intended to offer this summer are contingent on how the reopening process proceeds, particularly in Northern Virginia where two-thirds of our schools are located. I know our schools will be in touch with impacted families and will provide what they can if public health conditions permit.

Third, Diocesan schools, in concert with the Office of Catholic Schools, are actively planning for a variety of possible circumstances in order to be ready to support students when school resumes in the fall. A key element of this planning is readiness for a blended (in-classroom and eLearning) learning environment in the event this is needed. There is uncertainty about when it will be safe for students to return to school buildings, about what social distancing requirements will be in place while they are there, and about whether it may be necessary to return to an eLearning environment for limited periods. For these reasons, emphasis is being placed on pedagogical best practices for a learning environment that involves time in the physical classroom as well as eLearning. We are investing this summer in professional development for educators that will help strengthen further teacher readiness for hybrid delivery of the curriculum if that is required.

Whereas the shift to eLearning in March came upon us quickly and afforded little opportunity for advance planning, we have some time now, and the benefit of our experience this spring, to inform our preparations for delivery of the full curriculum in the fall, regardless of the limitations on gathering that may be in place.

An additional input to our planning is your responses to a survey we are currently deploying to all families. If you have not responded to it already, I ask you to take a few moments to do so. Your perspective is critical to planning our efforts.



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF
ARLINGTON

Office of Catholic Schools

200 North Glebe Road, Suite 503 • Arlington, VA 22203
Office (703) 841-2519 • Fax (703) 524-8670
catholicschools@arlingtondiocese.org

Our faith teaches us that there is a sacramental aspect to the physical presence of another person that cannot be replaced. We know that in-person instruction and collaboration is where our students learn best, and we look forward to a consistent return to that model. As long as social distancing persists, our Catholic school communities are anchors in uncertain times. Along with providing an excellent education, our Catholic schools provide children the opportunity to be a part of a strong community, which they need more than ever in times of social isolation. These times of uncertainty have also highlighted our need to be anchored in Christ, and Catholic school children are connected to Christ day-in and day-out. Thank you for making the sacrifices necessary to make this priceless gift possible for your children. Please know that we will do all we can to provide resources to schools to support need-based tuition assistance that can help children continue in Catholic school.

May God continue to bless you and your families, our Catholic school educators, and our Catholic schools.

Sincerely in Christ,

Joseph E. Vorbach III, PhD, MEd
Superintendent of Schools