

March 19, 2020

Dear Catholic-School Families in our Diocese,

On this feast of St. Joseph, patron saint of the universal Catholic Church, please know that I am praying for you for peace and health. The Lord reminds us in scripture that He has plans for us, “plans for your welfare, not for woe! plans to give you a future full of hope. When you call me, when you go to pray to me, I will listen to you.” (Jeremiah 29: 11-12) While we cannot fully understand our current situation, let these words remind us to see things through the light of faith and to trust in God’s providence.

I want to provide an update on education in our Catholic schools at this unsettled time. This fall, our Catholic schools embraced flexible instructional days (FIDs) as a way to continue to deliver our schools’ mission in case of snow closure, etc., once the State of Pennsylvania opened this option. While we had little snow, our preparation for FIDs served our schools well, and we did not miss a beat when the Governor decided to close schools until March 30. While we are not holding school onsite, we are teaching and learning through online instruction and with other materials. In its March 15 announcement, PDE referenced “continuity of learning plans,” and our schools have done exactly that — continued the delivery of our curriculum and faith instruction.

We do believe firmly that, by continuing their education, we are providing our students with some sense of normalcy, investing in their ongoing learning, and empowering parents as the first educators of their children. All our schools will continue to work hard to assist our families, including supporting students with special learning needs and offering meals to students who qualify for them. Please contact the principal of your Catholic school for more information.

The feedback from all stakeholders in this effort has been overwhelmingly positive, and the result is a moment in Catholic education that we should all be proud of. Throughout this crisis, we fully intend to continue teaching and learning as we are.

The Secretariat for Education in the Diocese of Harrisburg is providing guidance, support and professional development for our principals and teaching staff as they continue teaching and learning.

As we look at the prospect of returning to school on March 30, please know that our Catholic schools will continue to be assertive and thorough in implementing best practices that come to us from the State of Pennsylvania and the CDC in order to safeguard the health of all members of our school communities.

Thank you for your support and trust, and may God bless you and your families.

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