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**DIOCESE OF PALM BEACH**  
**OFFICE OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS NOTIFICATION**  
**Update from the Office of Catholic Schools**  
**July 8, 2020**

As we approach August and the start of the 2020-21 school year, there are many questions about what the new school year will hold. I am grateful to the task force of seven principals who worked for a number of weeks creating our Re-entry Plan for the return to school. It is the intention of the task force to have students back in the classroom come August 10, 2020 (some start dates vary in our five-county diocese.) The one-page summary of the plan is attached and the full plan is available on the website at [www.diocesePBSchools.org](http://www.diocesePBSchools.org). The task force reviewed much of the science provided by epidemiologists, pediatricians, state and local health departments, the CDC and others. We also used the parent survey results from early June, which indicated that more than 74% percent of our parents wanted students to return to their classrooms. Ultimately, this became the goal of the task force: return students to the classrooms, where learning is maximized through teacher and student interaction. On July 6, 2020, Richard Corcoran, State Commissioner for Education, issued an order indicating that all schools would re-open in August for face to face instruction, five days a week. Our re-entry plan is in compliance with this order.

**Strategic Social Distancing and Mandatory Facial Coverings**

Students will be spread out as much as possible within our classrooms, but in most cases, the distance between desks will be less than 6 feet. For this reason, facial coverings will be mandatory, and we will follow the experts' guidance on appropriate ages (currently 2 years old and above.) Strategic social distancing will be utilized. For example, elementary students will stay together in one group for most of the day and interaction with other students will be limited. In the event that someone within one classroom tests positive or is exposed to COVID-19, it would limit exposure to other groups of students within the school.

**Some other key points include:**

- Appropriate sanitation and disinfection through enhanced cleaning protocols are in place.
- Everyone coming on to campus should use the Self-Screening Checklist and will have their temperature taken upon arrival.
- Large gatherings and assemblies, including all-school Mass, are not recommended during the first quarter of the school year and until deemed safe. Gathering for Mass should follow diocesan protocols.
- Schools and centers will not allow normal visitation on campuses until further notice.
- If a student or household member is in a high-risk group, the parent may request at-home learning for their child. The format for this will vary from school to school. The principal must approve the request.

Over the next few weeks, the public schools will reveal their Re-Entry Plans. As some of our families have students in both our diocesan schools and public schools, we may have to adjust our plans to best accommodate these families. The course of the COVID-19 virus is also somewhat unpredictable, and we will also comply with any state, county or local ordinance or guidance that would include our schools.

Our intention is to follow this Re-entry Plan, but it could be that at any moment we may have to pivot to adapt to an ever-fluid situation. Before the start of the school year, each of our schools will have in place a Return to School Plan to reopen our school facilities and an Instructional Continuity Plan in the event that our school campuses are forced to return to at-home learning for all students. I am confident that we are prepared for the coming year.

We are grateful to you for your continued support and involvement in Catholic schools in our diocese. Our schools have responded admirably to this pandemic. It has been an extraordinary effort the last several months by our priests, administrators, teachers, staff, students, and parents to make the very best of a difficult situation. I have been inspired by the perspective of many of our students as they wrote about their experiences this past year. For example, on July 1, we launched a new initiative titled: ***Have Faith, Our Future is in Good Hands***, which showcases student profiles and direct quotes from those in our schools regarding their experience transitioning to virtual learning. To view these profiles, visit our social media sites or [www.DiocesePBSchools.org](http://www.DiocesePBSchools.org). Here are three examples:

"After speaking with friends and family that attend local public school during this time, I am really able to appreciate how much more private schools offer and, specifically, St. John Paul II Academy's effort to make the virtual experience straightforward and valuable. They are still teaching the regular course material that we would have been doing in class and I am learning new material regularly. Still, I miss being in school because of the SJPII community."

*Emaliese Caicedo, St. John Paul II Academy*

"There are many benefits to a Catholic education. Growing up in a Catholic family, I became accustomed to living my life through my faith. In addition to the faith I have received at home, going to school with the similar, if not the same environment, really showed me how important it is to incorporate your faith in all that you do. Without my faith, I would feel lost and astray from my life aspirations. In times like this, faith, especially comes into effect. With the outbreak of COVID-19 apparent worldwide, my faith aids in giving me assurance that all will be alright and fall into place with God's will. As it has also had an effect on my education, this time in my life has shown me that I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

*Catherine Owens, Cardinal Newman High School*

"During these challenging times, I have remained positive and cannot wait for this to pass. Although I do not see that happening anytime in the near future, I have faith that this is coming soon. I am so truly blessed to be a part of the John Carroll family and I've realized how grateful I am to be part of a community so full of faith, love and support."

*Ella Basile, John Carroll High School*

Let us remain strengthened and united through our prayers as we prepare for the 2020-2021 school year. We are planning for another great year in our Catholic schools! As Catherine said above,

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13)

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

**Gary Gelo**

Gary Gelo  
Superintendent of Schools



# Diocese of Palm Beach Office of Catholic Schools

## SCHOOL RE-ENTRY PLAN

### For Fall 2020 in Response to COVID-19

*“Educating is an act of love; it is like giving life.” -Pope Francis*

The Office of Catholic Schools in collaboration with the Florida Department of Education, Florida Catholic Conference of Bishops, local health officials, administrators, and other diocesan staff has worked diligently to develop a school re-opening plan that allows students to return to campus in a manner that reduces health-related risks while maintaining an environment in which we focus on the education of the whole child.

Our schools will provide on-campus learning with the necessary campus and classroom modifications needed to support students safe return to school on August 10, 2020 (Some start dates vary in our diocese.). This plan may be updated regularly based on the guidance of local and state health officials. School principals will share updated information on the school’s website and distribute all updates to parents via the school information system.

This plan, and any other related policies and procedures, may be revised at any time with or without prior notice and the specific provisions may be subject to the discretion of the Superintendent of Schools and school principals. This plan may differ from other entities within the Diocese of Palm Beach due to varying local laws and the unique nature of the services and population that each entity serves.



### Academics & At-Home Learning

Students will begin the 2020-2021 academic year in August on campus with the expectation that specific health and safety procedures will be required. If a student or their household member is in a higher-risk group, they may request at-home learning in a modified format (options may vary from school to school). The request must be approved by the principal. The need for this at-home learning accommodation will be evaluated quarterly.



### Temperature Screening

Students, teachers and staff will be required to have temperature checks daily upon arrival. Anyone with a temperature higher than 100.3 degrees will be sent home. A doctor’s note will be required prior to returning to school. Random temperature checks may be done throughout the school day. Anyone with a temperature, feeling ill, or exhibiting any symptoms of COVID-19 should stay home and seek medical attention to maintain a healthy school campus.



### Cleaning & Disinfecting

Enhanced cleaning protocols have been established to disinfect the campuses daily. High-touch surfaces will be regularly disinfected throughout the school day. Teachers and staff will be provided the necessary cleaning and disinfecting materials.



### Strategic Social Distancing

Students, teachers, and staff are required to wear facial coverings. Local ordinances will be used to determine appropriate ages/grades. Classroom seating will be arranged to maximize strategic social distancing and to limit face-to-face contact. Whenever possible, all should practice social distancing by staying away from others and eliminating contact with others.



### Visitor Protocol

Schools and centers will not allow normal visitation to the campus until future notice. Any approved visitor on campus will check in at the main office and will be escorted with a face mask around the campus upon completion of a self-screening form. This requirement is now in place based on the need to limit the exposure of our students, faculty and staff.



### In Mass, Large Gatherings & Sporting Events

School Masses will follow the protocols in place by the diocese. All athletic or sporting events must adhere to state and local guidelines. Assemblies and large gatherings are not recommended during the first quarter.