



June 26, 2020

Dear Families,

There is no doubt that we have witnessed history making moments in these last few months! From a worldwide pandemic to the space launch, we have had plenty to keep us growing and learning in our lives. Our prayers have been for the health and well-being of our entire community, and we have specifically prayed for our Catholic school families. We are grateful to you for your partnership with your schools, your continued support, and your commitment to our Catholic education in The Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston!

Even during this time of unprecedented uncertainty, we have seen amazing ingenuity and creativity from students, teachers, and principals alike that brought spirit and life to our virtual classrooms. We also were able to see virtual attendance rates and student engagement well above other school systems. Because of the tremendous amount of student engagement during the distance learning time, we are going to begin the school year with standard grade level work, providing additional support as needed. Every school will do a formative assessment at the beginning of the year to determine how the student is performing, and we will form instruction based on that assessment and how well the student met the benchmarks required.

We have also been working tirelessly over the last several months to develop a plan for how we will reopen our schools and bring our students back onto campus. We miss them so much! I would like to share with you that we are planning to be back in our school buildings in August, and we are planning to follow all guidance from the Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops, the governor's orders, and local health officials' guidance. Because the pandemic is constantly presenting new and ever-changing information, we are preparing our schools to open the week of August 13th, with the possibility of several scenarios.

Because we span 8,800 square miles, are in 23 different school districts, and have 55 schools that are working to make the best decisions for their parent communities, we as an Archdiocese are giving the principals parameters in which to function, yet the flexibility to meet the needs of their individual schools; this will allow for schools to be able to start school in August using a traditional calendar and a learning plan meets the requirements of the state and their local authorities.

Your principal is working with a team to develop your school's local plan for reopening and should be able to share the plan by July 15th, based on the parameters provided by our office and the state. Some parents have expressed concerns for vulnerable members of their family, asking for the ability to make distance learning available for their student(s) rather than face to face attendance. Understanding the need for this option for family members as well as students with compromised health, schools are working to incorporate this option if they have the resources available to them and can work this out on a case by case basis at individual campuses.

We have requested that the principals develop an Instructional Continuity Plan with three options, which include the following:

1. Face to Face Instruction – this option will include entrance protocols, cleaning procedures, social distancing, academically excellent instruction, social and emotional supports, and strong Catholic identity.
2. Remote Learning Plan - what we experienced this past quarter of the school year where schools are restricted from gathering in-person yet keep engagement with families, and
3. Hybrid Plan - will be in place in instances where the entire student body is unable to be on campus at one time due to the requirements of limited numbers due to social distancing expectations.

Know that whichever plan we start the school year with, attending to the social-emotional health of students and faculty remains paramount. Be assured that we continue to be proactive in our efforts to protect the health of our students and staff. Each campus will develop their own health and sanitation procedures using supplies from the great state of Texas.

We have received many calls in the office asking about tuition and reduced rates should we have a hybrid or remote learning plan in place. As a non-profit entity, Catholic schools are dependent upon tuition to meet their contractual obligations for salaries and benefits of staff as well as balance their budgets. Our schools often do not charge the actual cost to educate a student, therefore, every tuition dollar and fundraising dollar matters to help us maintain operational vitality of our Catholic schools. Please understand that a reduced rate for tuition is not financially a possibility for our schools. Families needing tuition assistance are encouraged to apply through FACTS.

We are honored to partner with you as parents in our Catholic schools as we transform learning for our students and continue to provide an unapologetically Catholic education that is rigorous and relevant to today's learning and steeped in a Catholic worldview. We look forward to hearing from you as you return to your schools and remain committed to Catholic education in our Archdiocese.

We hope that you will enjoy this summer and be ready to welcome the new academic year, and another opportunity to transform our world through education, together!

In Him we trust,



Debra Haney, Secretariat Director and Superintendent of Catholic Schools