



DIOCESE *of* SACRAMENTO
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Wednesday, April 29, 2020

Re.: Our plans for returning to campus in August

Dear Catholic School Community:

It brings me great joy to announce that we plan to return to school this August on campus and on schedule. Bishop Soto recently [offered a statement](#) on steps we are taking in parishes to prepare for our return to public worship, and in coming back to campus, Catholic schools will also take every reasonable precaution to keep students safe and slow the spread of COVID-19.

Yesterday, Governor Newsom said that California public schools may open in July because of the ground they have lost academically. Thanks to our families' and teachers' commitment to Distance Learning, we do not share the same concern. Our students are on pace in our core subjects and will not need to spend the summer making up for lost time. If there are any gaps in academic progress, our dedicated teachers will work with one another to identify those as each student moves into the next grade.

Some of you may want a summer program for your students, and I am happy to say that many of our Catholic schools will offer summer school (with all the necessary precautions) once we have the go-ahead from public authorities. We will share more about all various options of summer programs on our diocesan website (www.scd.org/summer) as our plans take shape.

School will look different when we return; some of the precautions we will have in place will seem familiar, and others will be new. You may recall that the California Department of Public Health issued a document on March 7 entitled "School Guidance on Novel Coronavirus or COVID-19," providing four "scenarios" designed to slow the spread of COVID-19; we operated under Scenario II for a week before we moved to full Distance Learning. The measures included suspending school-wide assemblies and whole-school Holy Mass, providing for prayer in other ways; providing for classroom-level distancing, including the placement of desks in rows with space between them; eating lunch in the rooms and the staggering of recesses; ensuring employees stay home if they or a family member is running a temperature or has a respiratory infection, or signs of coming down with one; and reminding parents to be vigilant in monitoring their children's health, keeping children with any symptoms home.

We look forward to being back on campus, and will take all reasonable precautions to reduce the risk of transmitting COVID-19. It looks like it will be a while until we have a vaccine, but as we return to work and school, we can all play our part in slowing COVID-19. The CDC has issued new guidelines for cleaning public facilities, and our public officials are finding that vigilance surrounding hygiene matters. An Assistant City Manager shared the following thoughts with me: “Our City Police and Firefighters have been on the front lines of this COVID outbreak since February experiencing multiple direct contacts with the public as they deliver essential emergency services. To date, none of our First Responders have become infected from those on-duty contacts. We believe this is a direct result of uncompromised protective hygiene.”

Our students will be in class together, and we will be diligent in minimizing potential exposure. We will review every classroom in regards to desk placement and spacing. Students won’t change desks or mix with other classes. Our students have already learned a lot about limiting personal contact (e.g. no handshakes, ‘high-fives’, or hugs), distancing during conversation and play, and getting their work done on devices. We will be purposeful in teaching and reiterating to kids about hygiene - how to sneeze, how to cough, and how to wash their hands properly afterward. We educators have learned that we can manage a lot of tasks without the need to be in the same space together. Assemblies don’t have to be in person. Our priests can visit our students in their classrooms, and offer school Mass via livestream. We won’t eat lunch in the cafeteria or go to recess at the same time. Students will stay in the same classroom, properly spaced, and teachers will come to them. You will see faculty and staff taking many of the same precautions as first responders, and we encourage you to do the same at home.

Each of our campuses is unique, and the exact measures we take will vary from school to school, so please expect communication from your principal over the summer as we prepare your campus for our students’ return. We also know that the public health response will evolve, and we will continue to work closely with our counties’ departments of public health. A lot has happened in the last six weeks, and we are ready for whatever the public health authorities ask of us. I will continue to be in touch with you as the situation develops. Catholic schools are at the forefront of the move to Distance Learning, and we will also lead as we return to campus.

During this time of Distance Learning, I have emphasized faith, community, and growth, and as we return to school, those objectives remain the same. Thanks to the efforts of all involved - students, parents, principals, and teachers alike - our schools have remained strong despite the disruption. Our faith is stronger than ever, our communities are intact, and our children are learning. We look forward to offering our gratitude for all these things together on campus.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "LINCOLN SNYDER". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Lincoln Snyder
Superintendent and Executive Director of Schools
The Roman Catholic Diocese of Sacramento