



*Office for Catholic Schools*  
*Diocese of Scranton*

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June 30, 2020

Dear Catholic School Families:

We hope this message finds you healthy, safe, and enjoying the early days of summer! As we continue to reflect on the unprecedented nature of the end of the school year, we are reminded of your care, compassion, and commitment to Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Scranton. We are ever grateful for your support!

While one year has concluded, we have swiftly transitioned into planning for the reopening of our schools for the fall of 2020-2021. We appreciate the honest and timely feedback that you provided in the recent survey for reopening schools. With over 2,500 respondents, the significant response will inform our decisions. From these survey responses, 74% desired a return to the most traditional form of in-person instruction in the fall, while following health and safety guidelines. We write today to share our goal of doing just that and opening our schools for in-person instruction this fall. We are committed to achieving this goal in a way that, above all else, prioritizes the best interest, safety, and health of our students, faculty, staff, and school families.

In order to achieve this goal, we developed a Diocesan Health and Safety planning committee. Our Health and Safety planning committee, comprised of diocesan and local school administration and clergy, medical professionals with expertise in pediatrics and quality assurance, and parents, has been reviewing the guidance provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH), the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). The collective research of various data sources will be overlaid by the survey results to determine the best practice for reopening our schools. The Diocesan level guidelines will then be tailored by the individual schools to encapsulate the needs of their unique environment. To achieve this, local school level teams will be developed in the coming weeks to provide details regarding their local health and safety plans.

The overarching goal of our Diocesan Health and Safety committee is to minimize the risk of the spread of coronavirus disease, while also promoting healthy habits for our students and school families. Understanding the fluid nature of this disease, we are charged with making decisions now based on the most recent scientific evidence available through our local, state, and national agencies and associations. Please know, we also acknowledge that with updated guidance, evidence, and research, our decisions may change. Our commitment is to keep you informed and assured that each decision will only be made with the best interest, health, and safety of all.

Returning to school in the fall will likely be different for everyone. To prepare all of our families for changes, we will be providing a series of videos entitled, "Sharing Good Health," during which our committee members will be providing pieces of our plan and the rationale

behind the decisions. We are excited to be working with experts who share the same passion and commitment for the Catholic education and who want to ensure we are acting responsibly. We thank this group for the countless hours each member has already devoted to researching topics and providing current, reliable and valid evidence to guide our decision-making.

In the coming weeks, we will begin our video series, which will be emailed and posted to our website.

Thank you for your patience as we work to provide a safe learning environment for our students this fall. We pray that God continues to guide us in our planning and keeps all of our school families healthy, safe and happy during the summer months.

Sincerely,

The Diocese of Scranton Catholic Schools Health and Safety Committee

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Vice Principal of Holy Cross High School

Eric Deabill, B.A.  
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Katherine Lincoln, D.O., FAAFP, FACFP  
Wound Care Specialist, Chair of Clinical  
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Jason Morrison, M.B.A.  
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