



August 18, 2020

Dear High School Parents,

Throughout the quarantine period of the Spring, we communicated regularly with you regarding the Secondary Schools. As we prepare for reopening, this letter is part of our ongoing commitment to keep you informed regarding our plans.

New State Guidelines

On August 10, 2020, the PA Department of Education issued new guidelines on recommended educational models. The state guidance relies on two standard public health metrics: incidence rate and the positive percentage level of diagnostic testing. On a weekly basis, the PA Department of Health will publish the level of community transmission of COVID-19 for every county in the state. The state has recommended instructional models based on the COVID-19 level.

Covid-19 Level

Low
Moderate
Substantial

Educational Model

Full in-person model or blended learning model
Blended learning model or full remote learning
Full remote learning

While the guidelines are not mandatory, Archdiocesan high schools will utilize the recommended learning model within two school days (48 hours) of any change in status. We have instituted this transition time to allow teachers, administrators, parents and students to prepare for the change. Based on the current levels, all five counties in the Archdiocese are in the “moderate level,” which allows for our hybrid or blended learning model. Should COVID-19 cases increase, we are prepared to implement full remote learning until the cases subside.

A few days after the new state guidance was issued, the Chester County Health Department, which serves both Chester and Delaware Counties, recommended that all schools begin the school year virtually through October 9, 2020 due to their anticipation of increased cases as a result of Labor Day holiday activity. After careful consideration of this recommendation, we have decided to continue to follow the state guidance on this issue since it is fact based on actual cases. If the level of transmission increases to the substantial level in a county, our schools are prepared to provide an entirely virtual instruction model.

Health & Safety Plans

All high schools have established pandemic committees that have developed detailed Health & Safety Plans as required by the state. These plans were thoroughly reviewed by the Office of Catholic Education and approved by local school boards. The plans will be shared on the schools website and each school will share a video outlining their preparations and our remote learning enhancements.

As students return in the fall, they will be provided training to help ensure everyone’s safety.

Camera Systems

To facilitate remote learning, we are installing more than 450 cameras throughout our 17 high schools. As you will see in this [demonstration video](#), these sophisticated camera systems will enable us to offer the best remote learning experience of any high schools in our region. We ordered these cameras in June, but since they are in high demand nationally, we will not have all the systems in place at the start of school. Teachers will use their laptop cameras to broadcast classes until the systems are installed. The wiring for the cameras is being done in advance, so they will be able to be quickly installed when delivered.

High School Parents

August 18, 2020

Page 2

Advocacy

School districts are required to provide transportation to both public and nonpublic students, even during the pandemic. Many suburban school districts are moving to online learning for the upcoming school year and there have not been assurances given to nonpublic schools that buses will continue to roll for their students should they continue with in-person learning.

We need your help as parents to let the legislators in Harrisburg know that you, as taxpayers, want to have suburban school districts continue to provide transportation to our schools during this pandemic.

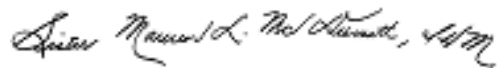
Click this link to log in and send your message: [Voter Voice](#)

Teacher Contract

Our high school teacher's union contract expires at the end of August and we are in the process of negotiating with the teachers' negotiating team for a new contract. We wanted to make you aware of this matter and want you to know we will do our best to reach a settlement as soon as possible.

If you have questions, you can reach out to your individual school or use our parent email: covid19@archphila-occe.org.

Sincerely,



Sister Maureen L. McDermott, IHM, Ph.D.
Superintendent for Secondary Schools