



ONE CHURCH
ENCOUNTERING JESUS
EQUIPPING DISCIPLES
LIVING MERCY

Date: Monday, March 30, 2020

To: All Catholic school families and staff

From: Michael W. Ashton, Ed.D., Superintendent

Subject: School Operations Through May

Dear Catholic School Communities,

Thank you for your continued partnership and engagement with our school communities. The stories coming from educators and homes are amazing. I am also moved and inspired by the extraordinary sharing and collaboration of our school and church employees, families, and civic partners to continue Catholic education in this adjusted environment.

We learned this week from Governor Ricketts, Commissioner Blomstedt and State Epidemiologist Dr. Gary Anthonie that we will continue this remote learning environment through the last quarter/semester of the school year.

We face this news in a characteristically Catholic school way. As we remain hopeful that there might be better news later, we are also a practical and resourceful people. We know that our efforts now must turn toward planning and preparing for an unusual April and May of school, and that it won't be easy. Consider Joseph's advice to the Pharaoh (Genesis 41). We can imagine they prayed hard that there wouldn't be a famine on the way, but that didn't stop them from acting on that dire prediction.

What our planning, preparation and execution looks like—online experiences, printed packets, community resources - will be unique to each individual school based upon resources available in those schools and homes. There are considerations for food availability, special education services, connectivity, and much more. There is no single best way to do all of this, but our educators are in constant dialogue with each other and their parents to learn and share what is working and what is not.

In addition to the intense activity of running a Catholic school in a new way, communities are very active in their pursuit of questions such as:

- how and when will we celebrate graduation?
- how do we create moments of encounter with Christ in this setting?

- will there be extra instruction over the summer?
- what does “grading” look like in a virtual classroom?
- what events and moments can we create remotely that capture the joy, anticipation and closure of so many Spring school activities like seasonal liturgies, service projects, extra-curriculars, recognition ceremonies, field trips, culminating activities, and transition preparation?

To support your efforts, the Catholic Schools Office and Chancery maintain constant contact with our health authorities, the department of education, the governor’s office, and our civic partners. We are able to bring various leadership and educator groups together in common conversations to pool our knowledge and distribute new resources. We aim to be as transparent as possible as new information affects our predictions and forecasts. We all must remain agile and aware to respond to this constantly shifting environment.

As our schools endeavor to sustain the 2000+ employees that serve your children, including those hourly/daily employees who are standing by waiting for buildings to reopen, we are amazed and touched by the conviction of our parishioners, parents, and donors who continue to rally and support Catholic education, even as they face their own personal hardships. Our archdiocesan vision of “One Church” is seen in these most challenging moments. We are grateful for the partnerships between our public school districts, the Nebraska Department of Education, public health officials across our state, and media outlets who continue to share updated information for our communities. We also keep our frontline responders in our prayers as we all rely on their sacrifice and courage in the face of this new threat.

Thank you for your continued diligence, prayers, hard work and patience. We are all on this journey together with Christ at our side.

In Prayer,



Michael W. Ashton, Ed.D.