



July 31, 2020
Memorial of St Ignatius of Loyola

Dear Catholic school supporters,

Peace in Christ.

As we prepare for the beginning of school while still confronting the threat of COVID-19, I wanted to call your attention to two important government statements as we prepare for in-person education for our young people in Catholic schools. First, on July 24, the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) stated that returning to in-person instruction is in the best interest of students and families, and this return to in-person instruction can be accomplished in a way that mitigates the spread of COVID-19. The statement can be found [here](#). Guidance from the CDC provides the basis for public health decisions in the United States. Local public health departments help craft additional guidance that is intended to help keep communities healthy. Schools, businesses and other organizations work to prudentially integrate the recommendations of those public health authorities responsible for helping us better understand the steps we can take to mitigate the spread of disease.

Second, less than a week after the CDC's guidance, Governor Walz and his team announced a learning plan for all public and charter schools for the 2020-21 school year. In partnership with our Catholic school parents, we are mindful that our Catholic schools of the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis are nonpublic schools and that we are responsible for making our own prudent decisions for the good of the children and families we serve. The importance of in-person instruction for students is underscored by both the recent guidance of the CDC and the statements from the Governor's Administration. Serving over 29,000 PreK-12 students, Catholic schools of the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis know from experience that the best way of serving our families and students is through in-person instruction. Our Catholic schools will accomplish their goal of serving Catholic school families through in-person instruction through the implementation of a set of required health and safety protocols that promote a safe and healthy return to school.

Through this pandemic, we have learned of the need to remain flexible and Catholic schools have developed plans to deliver student learning if there is a need to shift temporarily from in-person instruction to another mode of instruction. As we continue to work together to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on all Minnesotans, as good neighbors, we are actively seeking equitable access to health and safety student resources the state has made to public schools to assist in the safe return to school.

The challenges related to COVID-19 have been significant, particularly for our parents, students and teachers. Yet over the last five months, we have learned that with a careful approach to health and safety, together as a vigilant community, we can mitigate the spread of COVID-19. In moving forward with our plans for in-person learning at the start of the 2020-21 school year, Catholic schools will continue to partner with our parents, teachers and health experts to educate in a way that promotes health and safety for our kids and for our community. Each Catholic school is currently implementing Archdiocesan-wide requirements in order to 1) continue providing a quality Catholic education for all students 2) mitigate the risk of the spread of disease and 3) build a culture of health and safety. These Pandemic Preparedness and Response Plans have been created in collaboration with stakeholders and local experts; give careful consideration for the latest public health recommendations; and are able to respond flexibly and efficiently to the needs of students, families and the wider community.

Along with developing and implementing health and safety protocols, both the Archdiocese and our local Catholic schools are communicating with families the need for vigilance and flexibility in confronting COVID-19. We have and will continue to educate families, providing resources and reminding them that keeping our schools' health requires that every family do its part through careful attention to the vigilance that the CDC is encouraging for all Americans. Working together, families and schools can meet the goals of health and safety as we continue to provide an excellent Catholic education for our young people.

Sincerely in Christ,



Most Reverend Andrew H Cozzens
Auxiliary Bishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis
Vicar for Education



Dr Jason E Slattery
Director of Catholic Education

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