



June 19, 2020

Dear Saint Joseph Catholic School families,

Thank you for your continued patience as our Diocesan Schools continue to plan for the reopening of our schools in August. Please read the updated attached letter from the Office of Catholic Schools' Superintendent Kelly Lazzara in regards to our Diocesan schools reopening. **All diocesan schools will be opening with in-person instruction five days a week.** Please read the letter for more details.

At this time, SJS is developing its Health Mitigation Plan to address social distancing, sanitation/cleaning, student services, etc. under the guidelines from CDC and VDH.

Here is a specific step-by-step update in regard to SJS 2020-21 school reopening planning:

Step 1. Father Brian, Ms. Rota, Ms. McElheny, and I are currently working on a draft of the SJS Health Mitigation Plan, which will be submitted to our local health agency, the Office of Catholic Schools and the Virginia Council for Private Education. A Health Mitigation Plan will be developed for Phase II and Phase III.

Step 2. A draft will then be presented to our 2020-21 faculty leadership team for comments and input.

Step 3. A draft will then be shared with all faculty/staff as well as stakeholder representatives, including HSA parent representatives for comments and input.

Step 4. Father Brian, Ms. Rota, Ms. McElheny, and I will take all feedback to create a draft for approval at the diocesan level.

Step 5. Once the SJS plan is approved by the Office of Catholic Schools, then it will be shared with our families.

As you think of concerns/ideas, please feel free to share them with the Administration Team by emailing myself, Ms. Rota, or Ms. McElheny. We are committed to ensuring the health and wellness of our students and employees while continuing to promote our mission of developing scholars, citizens, and disciples.

Blessing,

Mrs. Sarah A. Owens, M.Ed

Principal

Saint Joseph Catholic School



June 25, 2020

Dear Parents and Members of the School Community,

This has been a difficult time and I thank you for your support and patience during these past months. The Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Richmond are finalizing plans for the reopening of our schools and we will be offering in-classroom instruction five days a week for all students when we return to school in August.

On June 9th, Governor Northam issued Phase Guidance for Virginia Schools in order to plan for reopening schools and offering in-person instruction to students. The Phase Guidance, which is aligned with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), is designed to help private schools mitigate risks associated with COVID-19. The Guidance provides recommendations for the types of in-person instruction and programming that should be offered in each Phase as well as the corresponding health, safety, and physical distance measures.

The opportunities for in-person instruction in each phase are as follows:

- **Phase One:** special education programs and childcare for working families
- **Phase Two:** Phase One plus preschool through third grade students, English learners, and summer camps in school buildings
- **Phase Three:** all students may receive in-person instruction as can be accommodated with strict physical distancing measures in place
- **Beyond Phase Three:** divisions will resume "new-normal" operations under future guidance
These school Phases are aligned with the existing Forward Virginia phases.

Our Catholic schools, as are all private schools, are individually responsible for deciding how to adhere to this guidance and may choose to offer in-person instruction and programming that varies from the Phase Guidance when protocols are in place to reduce the risk of spreading the virus.

After careful review, consideration, and consultation our diocesan schools in the Catholic Diocese of Richmond will be submitting a variance to allow for social distancing in our classrooms during Phase 3 to between 3ft and 6ft. This variance will allow us to offer in classroom instruction 5 days a week in conjunction with the Phase 3 Guidance.

Our focus is on the health and safety of our students while meeting their academic, spiritual, social, and emotional needs. Each school will develop a customized mitigation health plan that includes procedures

detailed in CDC guidance to promote behaviors that reduce spread, maintain healthy environments and implement operations to maintain the health and safety of the entire school community. School mitigation health plans will be submitted to the Office of Catholic Schools, the Virginia Council for Private Education, and to local health agencies. Once complete, your principal will share these plans with you.

The last quarter of the 2019-2020 school year was unprecedented and full of uncertainty. I am extremely proud of our faculty and staff regarding how they were able to quickly adapt and continue to educate your children through the end of the academic year. We are using this time to be proactive and to develop comprehensive plans for different scenarios that may present themselves during the 2020-2021 school year related to the COVID-19 virus. There may be times during the school year when Executive Orders are issued for the Commonwealth to revert back to Phase 2 or even Phase 1. If that happens, we will know our options. I assure you that all our decisions will be based on the overall well-being of our students, faculty/staff, and the entire community.

We are looking forward to opening the doors to our classrooms to students in late August. In the meantime, I wish you all a fun-filled and safe summer. Thank you for your continued support of Catholic education.

Yours in Christ,

Kelly M. Lazzara

Kelly M. Lazzara
Superintendent of Schools
Catholic Diocese of Richmond