



## Department of Catholic Schools

Archdiocese of San Antonio  
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Dear Catholic School Communities,

Catholic schools are at the heart of living our Catholic tradition and supporting parents in passing on our faith. It is a ministry of the Church committed to providing our community the academic and spiritual benefits of a Catholic education, even in this time of great challenge.

The Archdiocese of San Antonio consists of 38 schools located in 19 counties in south central Texas. Each school is uniquely prepared to respond to the challenges of the coronavirus pandemic based on student enrollment, facility capacity, and other local considerations.

All schools within the archdiocese have been working diligently since the conclusion of the spring semester to make their campuses ready for the upcoming 2020-2021 academic year through curriculum planning and by preparing their physical spaces for a safe return to campuses. Many lessons were learned during the abrupt shift to distance learning in March. The archdiocese is committed to opening campuses for in-class instruction when the administration, faculty and staff of each school are confident and comfortable with the measures taken to return in a safe and responsible manner.

While it is not possible to eliminate all risk in furthering the spread of COVID-19, there are numerous steps which schools can take to significantly reduce the risks for students, teachers, staff, and their families. We believe we are implementing best practices according to the latest public health information. Measures will be stringently implemented to help prevent the virus from entering the school and to mitigate the likelihood of community spread on campus. Among the practices to be implemented are:

- Academic programming which will allow parents to choose any one of three options to meet the individual learning needs of their child, while also meeting the health considerations of their family members.
  - On-Campus Synchronous Instruction
  - Asynchronous Instruction in which students attend school remotely in an on-line platform that does not consist of “live” instruction.
  - Hybrid Option that combines synchronous instruction while working remotely from home.
- The first day of school will be determined by each campus based on campus readiness of the physical space and training of faculty and staff in new safety protocols. The first day will occur between August 17, 2020 and September 8, 2020.
- For families choosing the on-campus instruction option, a conservative re-integration process will be implemented the first three weeks of instruction. This process will allow for the school year to begin by gradually bringing students back on campus in small groups. This transition process will allow for an opportunity to focus on the following:

- Student and parent comfort and confidence in understanding expectations for established protocols.
- Teacher comfort and confidence in classroom management procedures and safety protocols with these smaller groups of students.
- Evaluation of the efficiency and effectiveness of planned protocols and making adjustments as quickly as needed.
- Archdiocesan safety protocols -- aligned to recommended Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines -- have been established to include:
  - Physical Distancing
  - Masks to be worn at all times except for recess/PE sessions, at which times physical distancing protocols will be maintained.
  - Screening Process
    - Students and visitors will answer screening questions before they are allowed onto campus.
    - Students and visitors will have temperature checks.
    - Greatly restricting access onto campus, which will especially impact visitors and volunteers.
  - Facilities will be regularly and frequently cleaned and disinfected in a professional manner.

Schools will communicate directly to their local communities their planned first day of school and the process for on-campus instruction for those families choosing that option. Parent input in this process is greatly appreciated and needed. Campus plans must be submitted to the archdiocesan Department of Catholic Schools prior to August 1.

Changes to the public health situation will most likely necessitate that this guidance will be adjusted over the course of the academic year, including additional restrictions to school operations.

Led by our faith, Catholic schools affirm parents as our partners in the education of their children. We will continue to work together, as we always have, to ensure a safe return to campus this fall. We will keep our parents informed of new information and our collaboration with parents will be essential in our successful on-campus experience. United in our effort to create a safe environment and in commitment to our Catholic schools, our schools and parents will continue to live the Gospel through the education of their children.

Prayers and blessings for our entire community as we begin this next chapter in the COVID-19 experience.

*Marti West*

Marti West  
 Superintendent of Catholic Schools  
 Archdiocese of San Antonio