



March 25, 2020

Dear Catholic School Families,

First of all, we want to share with you that even though our meetings are now completely remote because of social distancing, the Office of Catholic Schools team has made it a priority to pray daily for the health and safety of our families and our Catholic school staff while we stay home to help fight the spread of the coronavirus COVID19.

During the initial 2-week school closure due to the virus, Archdiocese of Denver Catholic schools had a couple of options: 1) take an extended spring break during the 2-week closure and make up the missed contact days during the rest of the school year or by extending the year through the summer, or 2) offer distance learning at home to continue student learning while students were home, and avoid having to make up contact days after the 2-week closure. Most schools chose to offer distance learning plans during the 2-week closure and, at the time, distance learning plans were written to continue student formation while meeting the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) required number of contact days.

Our teachers and school leaders did a phenomenal job writing distance learning plans in an unbelievably quick turnaround period, written out of love of their students. In nearly all of our Catholic schools, there was no break in learning because of teachers' quick action. Teachers and school leaders deserve unceasing commendation for their work during this time. The Archbishop and we, in the Office of Catholic Schools, are extremely proud of their hard work.

As the spread of the virus continued, our Governor and local civic leaders ordered widespread, longer-term closures of businesses, restaurants, churches, and more. Governor Polis noted to leaders across the state that it was "increasingly unlikely" that students would be able to return to their classrooms this semester. What that means for all of us is that **we need to plan now to continue distance learning through the remainder of the school year.** It is not what we had hoped for but, as in all circumstances, we join each other as a Catholic community, united as the body of Christ present in every corner of our Archdiocese, focused on our mission of "educating young men and women, supporting parents in forming their children in truth, to have the intellectual, moral, and spiritual habits needed to be faithful and virtuous disciples of Jesus Christ, who are fully alive and serve the common good."

**It is important for you to know that Archbishop Aquila, through the Office of Catholic Schools, is putting into effect emergency distance learning requirements that will allow us to respond to the Archbishop's request of our schools to offer a distance learning school experience ordered toward student formation of the mind, body, soul, and heart. Our distance learning opportunities will aim to continue to form students in truth, such that all children in our schools continue to grow in the intellectual, moral, and spiritual habits needed to be faithful and virtuous disciples of Jesus Christ.**

In order to help our teachers plan rigorous, important, and valuable learning opportunities for students, **the Office of Catholic Schools is asking schools to follow a baseline set of expectations for distance learning moving forward.** The expectations include the same content areas we have always offered, with teachers available to teach and respond to student work. Our teachers will create instruction that will offer the content required to matriculate to the next grade level, grounded in the reality of the family and with respect for students' developmental ages, and still meeting the compulsory education requirements set by the state for families. We know you will continue to see a tremendous value in what is being offered. In fact, our archdiocesan schools are ahead of many of our public school counterparts, as we started distance learning sooner, and given the nature of our system, communities, and size are able to be nimble and responsive to student needs.

We are also aware that many of the typical sacrifices families are making to provide their children a Catholic education are perhaps becoming even greater during this time. Some of our families are experiencing financial hardships in unexpected ways and might be concerned about their ability to continue to pay for a Catholic education for their children. Please know that the Archdiocesan team is currently working through how to provide assistance for families most impacted by our current situation through an Emergency Relief Fund. We will continue to keep your school leaders informed of the opportunities that may become available in the coming days and weeks. As such, if you have concerns about your family's financial situation, please be sure to be in communication with your school leaders to look at what



options might be available for you now. Our hope is that our entire Archdiocesan church and school community can come together to lend a charitable hand and assist those most impacted. To that end, if there are families in our Catholic school community who have the means to support others, know that there will be opportunities to directly support a family in need within our own Catholic school community in the Archdiocese of Denver.

Know we are so grateful to you for working with us in this true partnership to educate your children. We are blessed to be part of a community which relies on the Lord for hope and peace with so much unrest in the world. We trust God invited all of us to this present moment to draw ever closer to Him, and to become holy through offering Him our individual and collective best efforts in this adapted work, and to being instruments of his love and mercy to one another.

May the Lord continue to watch over and protect all members of our Catholic school communities.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "E. J. Moo".

Elias J. Moo  
Superintendent  
Office of Catholic Schools

A handwritten signature in grey ink, appearing to read "A. Chilelli".

Abriana Chilelli  
Director of Curriculum and Instruction  
Office of Catholic Schools