



December 10, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

On Friday, March 13, 2020, students, faculty, and staff left school with the thought that they would experience a two-week quarantine to overcome the Coronavirus that had an outbreak in the United States. Little did any of us know what we would endure as next week marks nine months that we have lived through this virus and its challenges. Currently, we are in a “surge” of this virus and, as some have described, the return from the Thanksgiving break created a “surge upon a surge.” While hope remains before us as a vaccine for the virus begins distribution, the upcoming Christmas break, beginning at the close of the school day on Friday, December 18, poses another threat to health and safety, if we do not adhere to COVID-compliant behaviors.

As of today our COVID-positive statistics for our 19 parish and diocesan schools are as follows:

111 student cases out of 6027 students
16 staff cases out of 786 staff members

109 cases in the 14 schools in Delaware
18 cases in the five schools on Maryland’s Eastern Shore

All cases have been in the mild to moderate range.
School transmissions have not occurred; transmissions have occurred outside of schools.

When we reported to you one month ago, our total number of students and staff who had contracted COVID since September 1 was 58. In one month’s time the caseload has more than doubled in number. We are concerned that the Christmas break will result in even a greater number of COVID-positive cases.

Therefore, to mitigate the situation to some degree, parish and diocesan schools will be in session virtually the week of January 4-8. Administrators, faculty, and staff will report to school this week to provide virtual instruction for students. Specific directives for this week of virtual learning will be given by your school administration. As you’ll see in the parent letter to be sent, we wish to provide as regular a week of instruction as possible and, to this end, teaching from the classroom will further the “normalcy” of the week. Let us plan to start the new calendar year in a strong manner focusing directly on teaching and learning as we set the tone for 2021.

We believe this virtual week of learning will provide an opportunity for mitigating the spread of COVID and count on your support of this endeavor. We understand the challenges that present themselves arranging childcare of younger children, but hope this advance notice provides you the time to make such arrangements as working parents/guardians will do. We truly need everyone's support, if this quarantine will be effective.

We also rely on your full cooperation over the Christmas break with the four COVID-compliant behaviors we have reinforced since September 1.

- Wearing masks at all times out of the home
- Watching distance from others when out of the home
- Washing or sanitizing hands regularly throughout the day
- Wellness checks daily to address any health changes immediately

Together, and with the advent of a vaccine underway, we shall overcome this challenge.

Truly you have done a phenomenal job in educating students since the start of school. I have had the opportunity to see you in action in a visit to each school. I am amazed and grateful for all you do each day in this ever-changing environment in schools. Our families, too, are thankful for you. You have been a stabilizing force for them.

Before closing, allow me to join Bishop Malooly in expressing gratitude for all you are doing to support Catholic education in these trying times. You are cooperating with parents/guardians in their responsibility to provide their child(ren) a gift for this life and the next life that will outlast any wrapped package found under a Christmas tree. Be assured of Bishop's prayers for you and your family as we conclude Advent and celebrate the incarnation of our Savior.

This upcoming Sunday we light the third candle on our Advent wreath. It is the candle of joy and its pink color serves to remind us of hope. As Christians, we have remained people of hope throughout the centuries with our feet planted in the here and now but our vision focused on our destiny as saints. Let us renew our commitment to hope at Mass this weekend.

May the last two weeks of Advent offer you meaningful spiritual preparation for the celebration of Christmas and may you enjoy a happy, healthy, and holy Christmas and start to 2021.

Sincerely,

Louis P. De Angelo

Louis P. De Angelo, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools