



October 9, 2020

Dear Faculty and Staff:

As we look to the end of the COVID Cycle 1 (First Day of School – Fall Break) for this school year, the cooperation and support of school personnel and families of *Forward in Faith*, our diocesan school plan, and its iterations in local school plans have proven to be most beneficial in mitigating the spread of COVID in the 19 parish and diocesan elementary and secondary schools. To date, there have been 21 COVID-positive cases in parish and diocesan schools out of slightly more than 6000 students and 780 faculty and staff members. Fifteen cases were confirmed in Delaware and six cases occurred in Maryland involving 19 students and two adults. These individuals have been in isolation and a few classes and groups of students on sports teams also have been in isolation. Contact tracing has followed in all cases. None of the transmissions have resulted from school contacts; they are all the result of outside contacts transmitting the virus. All of the decisions regarding actions to be taken have been made under the direction of the Division (Department) of Public Health (DPH) in the respective state. In all cases the appropriate communication, as directed by DPH, has been disseminated. (As an FYI, private Catholic elementary and secondary schools report their COVID data separately from parish and diocesan schools.)

As we move into Cycle 2 (Fall Break – Thanksgiving), recommendations were sought from school administrators regarding next moves. Following a review by diocesan staff and given the current positivity levels in both states, the following actions have been approved by the *Forward in Faith* Steering Committee exercising an abundance of caution. Most schools will continue their current plans without changes in Cycle 2. Four elementary schools operating in a hybrid format that requested increased student numbers for in-person instruction were granted permission to make a moderate change in Cycle 2. These schools will communicate changes directly to school families and you. In all cases, any changes to be made at the local level regarding the number of students on campus require diocesan approval.

Our greatest concerns at this time have been sports and social activities. As a result of one COVID-positive case in CYM sports, 57 elementary students across three schools are currently in isolation. While students are isolated, they may not participate in sports practices or games and social activities that are school-sponsored. If school-sponsored sports and social activities lead to an increase in the numbers of isolated students, a re-evaluation of the sport or activity may be required. Therefore, it is imperative that we encourage parents and guardians to exercise responsibility to ensure that children and adults involved in out-of-school activities adhere to COVID-compliant protocols.

1. Masks at all times
2. Social distancing
3. Hand sanitization or washing regularly
4. Daily wellness screenings

COVID-consciousness is everyone's task. We are extremely grateful to school families who are diligent in protecting themselves and our school communities.

We extend a special note of gratitude to you – administrators, faculty, and staff of our Catholic schools. You have done an outstanding job over the past six weeks to protect your school community and create a safe and healthy learning environment. Although your workload has increased, you continue to meet the needs of both in-person and virtual learners and to support your colleagues. You are front-line workers at this time and doing an outstanding job! I wish our local media featured you for all you are accomplishing.

As we begin Cycle 2, we recommit ourselves to do all that can be reasonably done to educate both in-person and virtual learners. Families with questions about in-person or virtual opportunities for learning for their children were advised to meet with their school principal to discuss them. Our desire is to provide quality Catholic education – in-person and virtually – to all who desire it to the best of our abilities.

During this Month of the Holy Rosary, let us pray through the intercession of Mary, our Mother, for the health and safety of our children and one another.

Sincerely,

Louis P. De Angelo

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