



Office of Catholic Schools

May 26, 2020

May the peace of Christ be with you!

When we began the 2019-20 school year, we would have never imagined the unsettling circumstances under which we would conclude the year. All of us – our students, our faculties and support staff, and our families – were thrust into weeks of isolation, anxiety, and uncertainty. I want to commend our Catholic educators for doing such an amazing job these last three months and for the incredible job they have been doing since we began distance learning back in March. Our teachers are the heart and soul of our communities and they have shined with the light of Christ in these uncertain times. As we conclude this year, we are all eager to return to the familiar and established norms of back-to-school; however, in the absence of a vaccine, our old normal will change. The recent lifting of many restrictions has all of us turning to our plan for re-opening our schools in August.

The Office of Catholic Schools has organized a task force to review all possible options for us to return your students safely to their classrooms and school activities if possible. We are meeting regularly to work toward the goal to resume instruction in August with protocols and procedures in place that would allow us to re-open our school facilities to limit risk and mitigate the spread of the virus. The task force is using guidance from Florida and other states, the Centers for Disease Control and policies of the Diocese to direct our work.

Foremost on the minds of our families is what will instruction look like? Will it be distance learning or face-to-face? Again, our hope, if allowed by the state, is to re-open schools with teachers and students in classrooms. With that goal in mind, we must employ flexibility and creativity in reaching students and families across the broad spectrum of needs and circumstances in the eight counties in which we have Catholic schools. We want to be sure that we are serving both those able to be present in classrooms and through distance learning for those that choose to remain at home and/or quarantined for any number of reasons as we begin the school year.

As it has been since my first communication to you on February 28th at the start of this pandemic, information is constantly changing. That is why this communication is the first of several which will be sent to you updating our plans as we continue through the summer. A

survey is forthcoming that will ask you about your thoughts and preferences for your student(s) and family.

Our faith calls upon us to trust in God and the grace of the Holy Spirit. Many wonderful educators in our Diocese will be working together with my office to assure a smooth completion to this school year and now looking forward to the restart of the next one. I ask for your prayers and support as we continue to journey together.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Henry Fortier". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Henry Fortier
Secretary for Education/
Superintendent of Catholic Schools