



Catholic Education Office

Diocese of Rockford

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November 5, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians,

With your help, cooperation, and the continued dedication of our school principals and teachers, our schools have successfully remained open, with the exception of a few instances where remote learning has been required for a temporary period, our schools remain safe for everyone. Our school administrators continue to diligently follow the recommended CDC, IDPH, ISBE, and Diocesan COVID protocols, which have kept our COVID cases to a minimum.

Unfortunately, the test positivity rate 7-day rolling averages in each Illinois region remains high and continues to climb. School parents continue to follow the COVID protocols outlined in our *Diocesan School Reopening Plan* and the directives adopted and implemented at each of our schools.

While public officials discourage gatherings during the Advent and Christmas season, we anticipate that some may choose to travel and visit family and loved ones during the holiday season.

After careful consideration and discussions with members of the Diocesan Chancery and our school administrators, the Catholic Education Office has decided to shift our schools to remote learning to avoid multiple cohort quarantines due to holiday-infections.

The components of this Remote Learning Period are listed below:

- All Rockford Diocesan schools will pivot to virtual learning for two full weeks beginning January 4. Schools will return to in-class instruction **on Tuesday, January 19** (after the Martin Luther King Holiday).
- Moving to virtual learning for two weeks will allow families who choose to travel or attend family gatherings over the holidays to quarantine without the loss of instructional time and, in that way, helping to preserve the health of all students and staff members.

- If we experience a significant increase in COVID cases **after January 19**, additional remote learning periods may be implemented for our students' and staff members' health and safety.
- School administrators will have the option of having their teaching staff teach remotely from home or school (prior to the deep clean and disinfection of the school building discussed below).
- School administrators will have their school buildings "deep cleaned" and "disinfected" during this remote learning period. Once the school building has been disinfected, no one will be allowed into the school building until in-class instruction starts again.
- Remote learning will **not** begin **before January 4, 2021**, unless COVID cases continue to climb.
- The Catholic Education Office continues to track the 7-day infection rate data to gauge the virus's spread. If positive COVID cases continue to climb, it may become necessary to start remote learning earlier or extend it beyond January 19. If this becomes necessary, we will communicate that change to our parents as soon as possible.

Our goal in sharing this information with you now is to allow parents enough time to prepare for this period of distance learning. We will keep you updated with the latest news should our remote learning plans change.

As a Catholic community, in partnership with our school families, we accept our responsibility to care for others' health and safety through preventative behaviors. We hope that this decision will allow all families and employees to enjoy the upcoming holiday season and return safely for in-class instruction.

Thank you for your support of Catholic education. We will continue to remember our school families, students, and employees during this challenging time, and we pray for the healing of all who are affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Yours in Christ,

Michael Kagan
Superintendent of Schools

Vito C. DeFrisco
Assistant Superintendent of Schools