
THE ROMAN CATHOLIC

ARCHDIOCESE OF ATLANTA



OFFICE OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

March 10, 2020

Dear Archdiocese of Atlanta School Communities:

Every day we are receiving more news and updates regarding COVID-19, a respiratory illness caused by a novel (new) virus. Health officials are currently taking preventative measures to prevent the introduction and spread of COVID-19, also known as the Coronavirus. For the past several weeks, our schools have been taking steps to prevent the spread of any infectious diseases in our schools.

We are monitoring websites for both the CDC and the Georgia Department of Health for guidance as we attempt to minimize the chances of transmitting infectious diseases in our schools.

To prepare for a possible community transmission of COVID-19, the most important tasks for our schools are to plan and be ready. On-going preparations at our schools include additional efforts to disinfect frequently-touched surfaces, reminding our students to wash their hands thoroughly and frequently, appropriately covering coughs and sneezes, and reminding students and employees to stay home if they are ill.

Should one of our schools be identified with a case of COVID-19 in its community, we will immediately seek guidance from the applicable county health department. In consultation with county health officials, we will determine if, when and for how long a school may need to be closed. Guidance from the CDC and the Georgia Department of Health continues to be updated and will also serve as a resource for our school communities should direct exposure to COVID-19 be identified.

In the event that schools would need to be closed, our principals are preparing for continued learning for our students. Our three archdiocesan high schools have the capability to go 'virtual' and there should be little to no interruption to meeting curriculum expectations for our high school students. Dates for Advanced Placement exams are established by the College Board and we will closely monitor the ability to administer these exams on the dates established. Ongoing communication with the College Board would occur as needed should this become a concern.

In our grade schools, our administrators are reviewing and sharing online learning platforms and various other delivery systems so that learning may continue - simply posting homework assignments for students to complete will not address our curriculum objectives. A committee of our principals is currently working on guidelines for all grade schools so that learning continues across all of our schools and there is consistency in its application. As soon as possible, every grade school will communicate its plan for online and distance learning to its students and parent community in the event that school will need to be closed.

Our planning also includes consideration for international travel. High school mission trips will be evaluated on a daily basis utilizing updates provided by the CDC. In addition, Easter vacation and spring break will be occurring in most of our schools. The CDC has posted four countries - China, Iran, South Korea and Italy - where travel should be avoided. In the event that you have plans to travel to any of these countries, please notify your principal. We will follow the recommendations of the CDC and will require a 14-day transition before returning to school. This list of countries may change as time goes by. The CDC provides daily updates to its website and we will follow its recommendations as Travel Alerts are posted:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>

Your cooperation is requested in keeping your children home if they are ill. Students who become ill at school will not be allowed to go to class and parents will be expected to pick up their children within 30-45 minutes in order to limit the potential spread of any germs at the school. Please update your emergency contact list with your school as needed.

Lastly, as Catholic schools, we are called to maintain a healthy and positive perspective. When such serious health issues appear in our communities, it is easy to panic or even to blame others for the situation that has developed. I pray that we will continue to operate with our Gospel-centered values and thus maintain a positive learning environment for all of our students. Let us pray for the speedy recovery of all those who have been or will be diagnosed with the COVID-19 virus.

Additional and on-going communication will be forthcoming from your school administrators as needed. You are also encouraged to contact your local health care provider with any questions that you may have.

Thank you for your understanding and continued support of our schools.

Sincerely,



Diane Starkovich, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools