



DIOCESE *of* SACRAMENTO  
**CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**

May 29, 2020

Dear Parents:

I am writing to update you on our plans for our return to campus in August, let you know about the guidelines we expect to receive from public health authorities, and tell you how we are preparing to meet those expectations in each of our schools.

Since I last wrote to you, we have been busy behind the scenes preparing for next school year. With input from health officials and our own expert advisors, we created a baseline return-to-school protocol for the system. I have spent the past weeks walking a number of campuses with your principals, tailoring the document to the particular needs of each facility and community so that every school has its own unique protocol. As we complete these protocols, we will submit them to the respective county departments of public health to ensure that we meet their expectations. We already have our first county approval, and we expect more to follow once the state department of public health confirms its guidelines.

Our strategy for a safe return to campus hinges on two principles: cohorts and hygiene. In our elementary schools, we will keep your students in groups by class, and limit contact between classes during the school day to minimize the potential spread of any illness from group to group. This does mean that we will have to make some changes, like having multiple recess periods, eating lunch in our rooms, capping capacity in our bathrooms, and limiting the rotation of our middle school classes.

In our classrooms and common areas, we will be paying close attention to hygiene. We will have new rituals for dropoff, pickup, extension, and the like, and we will train our students in next-level cleanliness. Our desks will have as much space between them as each classroom allows, and we will require things of students like handwashing, coughing into a handkerchief, and disinfection of our spaces.

Your school will have its own protocol, and we will share it with you and ask you to acknowledge it once it is finalized and confirmed with the appropriate health authorities. We will ask for your support in things like family health checks before students come to school. Your students' list of things they need to bring to school will include some new items, such as sanitizer, cleaning supplies, their own water bottle, and the like, so morning backpack checks will become an important ritual.

Many of you have reached out to me with questions about specific aspects of our new normal. It is our priority to have your students on campus and in class daily. The guidance we are receiving from public health authorities continues to evolve, and we will do our utmost to meet those expectations; it is important for all of us to remember that we are still in a pandemic, and we will have to remain flexible.

Based on what I have seen so far, our public authorities are taking a practical approach to our response to COVID-19 as they formulate their guidelines. Many of you have asked me about guiding principles in a few key areas, for example: is it practical to have preschoolers or lower elementary students in masks? No. Should you expect to see the adults in masks when they are in common areas or outdoors? Most likely, yes. Might we take your students' temperatures before class? Yes. Will we be prepared for a return to distance learning if the counties ask it of us? Yes, but we hope our protocols will make school as low-risk as any gathering place can be.

Finally, I wanted to thank you for all you have done to support your students and our schools in faith, community, and growth. A lot has happened since March 6, when I sent out my first parent letter regarding COVID-19, and you have been incredible supporters and partners all the way. As you reflect on the past ten weeks, take pride in your engagement with your students in faith in new ways; in your entrepreneurial spirit in building community despite social distancing; and in the countless hours and effort you spent aiding your students in their studies. At times we all faced challenges with our new reality, but thanks to your commitment and the commitment of our incredible principals and teachers, we rose to the occasion for our kids; at a time when others debated what to do next, we focused on what is best for them and made it happen.

We look forward to sharing your school's protocol with you when it is ready. In the meantime, please enjoy the coming weeks of rest, recuperation, and recalibration with your students. I've asked our principals to also take some well-deserved downtime, but know that they will soon be back at school, preparing for your students' return.

I remain inspired by your patience, compassion, and resolve that mark these past weeks. Your students will forever remember your commitment to them in these times. May God bless our students, their teachers, and their parents and guardians, and may Jesus live in our hearts forever.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "LINCOLN SNYDER". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Lincoln Snyder  
Superintendent and Executive Director of Schools  
The Diocese of Sacramento