



Dear Parents and Guardians,

Together parents, students, administration, faculty and staff recognize that the months of school closure and distance learning have transitioned into a summer unlike any in the past. Between continuous news coverage and social media alerts we are inundated with information and speculation. As we look toward the fall, there are naturally questions concerning reopening plans for St. Bernadette School. At this time it is important to inform you that **our plan is to re-open school on Wednesday, September 2, 2020 for grades 1-8.** Scheduling the Preschool and Kindergarten class opening dates will be finalized in the coming weeks and communicated to families at that time.

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and Governor Charlie Baker have announced that all public schools will follow a two-step process with the initial step described as completing a preliminary reopening plan summary and submitting it to DESE by July 31. The second step will be to finalize comprehensive plan documents and submit them to DESE by August 10. The Catholic and private schools in Massachusetts are not required to follow this directive. However, in collaboration with the Superintendent of Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Worcester, Dr. David Perda, all non-private Catholic schools have agreed to submit such a plan to the Catholic Schools Office. In fact, creating such a plan has been a focus of twice-weekly administrator meetings and an important objective for all of our schools. As regulations regarding phased reopening plans have been implemented in Massachusetts, each of us has worked with our faculty, staff and nurses to follow state guidelines and determine our individual school plans. This has been a complex endeavor as circumstances have evolved.

As we continue to determine various aspects of reopening we realize that the traditional environment may appear different due to enhanced health and safety protocols. There are three different teaching and learning options to consider during this planning process. The first is a return to school with health and safety considerations in place, the second is a hybrid model that would include a split schedule of on-site and remote learning and the third would be full remote learning. As stated earlier, our preference and planning focus is on returning to on-site learning

with particular attention to prioritizing health and safety, including social distancing, masks, handwashing/sanitizing and disinfecting facilities regularly.

Our planning in the coming weeks will include consideration of these priorities while also refining both the hybrid and full remote learning models. Parent and faculty responses to recent surveys provide insights into the effectiveness of the remote learning experiences for families, students and faculty. The surveys also included many recommendations for improvement that will be important considerations as we plan for a possible mandate to close if there is another resurgence of COVID 19. Nearly 130 families responded to the survey, somewhat less than one-half of our total number of families. The responses included a wide range of diverse opinions. We will consider each viewpoint in the planning process.

Please be assured that our primary goal in resuming school is to safely and responsibly provide quality instruction in a faith-filled environment, engaging all students, teachers and families in the St. Bernadette School community. We will provide updates of this process in the coming weeks as we recognize that to accomplish this goal we will need your patience and prayers.

Yours in Christ,
Deborah O'Neil
Principal