



DIOCESE OF
FORT WAYNE-SOUTH BEND
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE

Date: April 20, 2020
To: Pastors with Schools, Administrators, Faculty, Staff, and Parents
Re: COVID-19 School Closure Update
From: Dr. Joe Brettnacher, Superintendent, Mr. Jeff Kieffer, Associate Superintendent, & Mr. Carl Loesch, Secretary for Catholic Education

Dear All,

This Monday, on the second week of Easter, we pray that the Holy Spirit has descended upon you like the dewfall to keep you and your family safe from the coronavirus pandemic. In these times, let us call upon our Holy Mother for protection.

Under thy protection we seek refuge, O Holy Mother of God; In our needs, despise not our petitions, but deliver us always from all dangers, O Glorious and Blessed Virgin. Amen

The purpose of this letter is to keep you informed as our school buildings remain closed. Still, our teachers continue to provide quality distance learning while remembering that our Lord Jesus Himself is the reason for our Catholic schools. Allow us to share some items with you.

The Most Reverend Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades

The Most Reverend Kevin C. Rhoades has scheduled a live-streamed liturgy for all of our schools on Friday, May 1, 2020, at 10:00 AM. He intends to celebrate the Mass of Saint Joseph the Worker, and we are grateful for his steadfast leadership during this crisis. We are asking our teachers to suspend all eLearning at the time. Please have your students, if possible, view and participate in the live-streamed Mass. More information to follow.

Thank You

The Catholic Schools Office wants to thank our administrators, faculty, staff, students, and parents for helping us navigate remote-distance learning during the COVID-19 School Closure. Principals have shown tremendous leadership working with their teachers to help them deliver quality lessons. We are grateful to our faculty and staff who have put in longer hours than usual to prepare-and-deliver lessons. Our students have shown remarkable resiliency and worked hard. It is their first encounter with prolonged distance learning, and we are proud of them for their efforts. It breaks our hearts that they have missed out on so much, but they too know it was necessary for their and others' protection. Parents, thank you for the countless hours you have put in to help your students with their lessons. As parents/guardians, we recognize you are your children's first and most important educators. Know we are grateful to you for this help and for allowing us to partner with you as we educate your child(ren) together.

School Closure Dates

Most of our principals have shared with you the last day of distance-learning classes. To maximize academic learning time, the Superintendent strongly recommended every school stay in session, educating students, until their last scheduled educational day based on their School Year 2019-2020 Calendar. However, due to the COVID-19 gathering size restrictions and social distancing, schools may choose to close two days earlier than their last scheduled academic day to collect materials and technology. Based on Governor Holcomb's mandate, schools may have to go longer if they have yet to achieve a minimum of 160 academic (in-person + remote learning) days or twenty or more academic days from April 2, 2020. All our schools should meet this requirement by their last scheduled education date.

Catholic Schools Office (CSO)



The CSO continues to meet with all principals weekly. Some of the items we are working on include the following.

- Our high school principals are making plans for Baccalaureate Mass and Commencement. They are planning dates in late June and July, in hopes that the Governor lifts the restrictions on large group gatherings and social distancing. As a last resort, we are looking at virtual options.
- Elementary schools will communicate soon about eighth-grade graduations if they have yet to do so.
- All principals will be planning for the opening of the School Year 2020-2021. The planning will include the possibility of beginning school via distance learning and preparing for the chance that sometime during the next school year, this could happen again. Our colleges and universities are doing the same. Let us pray that our schools will be open.
- Many of our schools and parishes have applied for the CARES Act, Paycheck Protection Plan. Schools are waiting on funding from the Federal Government's Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund, too. Also, the Federal Government has allowed schools to carry over unspent Title Funds from this year to the next. We plan to use that funding to ensure all our schools can provide quality eLearning.
- Our principals are working on plans for students to drop off their books, materials, and technology.

While we are working on a lot more than what we listed above, we wanted to provide you with another update.

Please remember that If your family experiences a layoff, making it a challenge to pay your tuition bill, we ask that your contact your pastor or high school principal. Explain your circumstances to them to determine whether the parish or school can offer you tuition assistance to cover what you cannot afford.

Again, thank you for allowing us to share in the responsibility of educating your child(ren). We are grateful for this awesome responsibility and partnership. Take care of yourself by practicing coronavirus prevention strategies. Remember to visit our COVID-19 website by clicking [HERE](#) to view all the daily updates.

You remain in our thoughts and prayers.

Blessings,

Joseph (Joe) A. Brettnacher, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Catholic Schools

Jeff Kieffer
Associate Superintendent

Carl Loesch
Secretary for Catholic Education

Cc: Pastors, Administration, Faculty, Staff, and Parent