

**COVID-19 Response and Distance Learning***We are in this together*

Dear Parents and Guardians,

The Archdiocese of Washington (ADW) Catholic schools, one of the jewels of the archdiocese, and rooted in the Gospel values of the Church, remain dedicated to teaching the whole child to know and love Jesus Christ. In late February 2020, when the novel coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) became more pervasive in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, the Catholic Schools Office and the school leadership of the archdiocesan schools, immediately reverted to a pre-designed and comprehensive plan to ensure the faith formation, academics, and overall education of our students would not be interrupted. Subsequently, on March 13, public officials closed public schools

“I feel I have faith, perseverance, and confidence while in distance learning. Technology has kept us going when we cannot physically go to school. My teachers keep me engaged and motivate my curiosity.”

– Mathias Tode
Eighth Grade Student at Mary of Nazareth School

and our schools closed their campuses. We immediately implemented our Archdiocese of Washington Catholic Schools Distance Learning Plan for archdiocesan schools.

I am pleased to share our plan, segmented into three (3) phases, to outline the yeoman efforts of our administrators and educators throughout the archdiocese. Without

interruption in instruction, our teachers, with support from families, have engaged our students in what is now unprecedented and innovative faith formation and academic instruction. Prayer, as a focal point of daily instruction, has been a wonderful motivator for many students. The comprehensive plan provides varied and diverse resources, and methods of instruction, in order to support the academic needs of each child. In addition, the plan includes operational elements to assist school leaders in meeting fiscal and enrollment management responsibilities, which all support and maintain the vitality of their schools.

While we are always aware that our parents and guardians are the first teachers for our students, the Archdiocese of Washington Catholic schools remain committed to supporting families, through our Catholic faith, and with all of the possible resources available to our educators, to make our students successful. It is my hope, in the spirit of partnership with all of our stakeholders, that this information will encourage you and reinforce your confidence in our schools during these challenging times. I believe that our families and teachers have and will continue to show an amazing perseverance, imbued with faith, that we will all get through this together.

Sincerely in Christ,

William H. Ryan, III, *Secretary for Catholic Schools*

“Finding new ways to teach the material has been an exciting challenge. I love coming up with engaging projects, games, and learning experiences that my students can do with their families.”

– Jules Herritz
Fourth Grade Teacher at St. John the Baptist School

While our campuses may be closed, our schools remain open. The heart and spirit of our schools are alive in our students who are at home learning with their first teachers, their parents.

During this unprecedented time, the premise of Catholic education shines through as parents from across the archdiocese partner with our teachers and principals to provide faith formation and academic instruction for our students.

Led by our faith and commitment to our students, all of our schools have successfully transitioned to a **distance-learning model** that remains authentically Catholic.

“I have been so impressed with the teachers, parents, and students over these past few weeks. Our students are learning and our community is stronger than ever.”

– Ashley Lewis
Principal at St. Mary of the Assumption School

Phase 1

Upon notification of the campus closure requirement, our schools prepared for Phase 1 distance learning. Technology assessments were completed, a strategy for communications with families was devised, and determinations were made about how to deliver academic instruction remotely. Instantaneously, on March 16, 2020, Catholic schools implemented Phase 1 of distance learning. Teachers and principals worked tirelessly to support our students to help ensure a seamless transition to our new normal. Resources and information were provided to support our parents, the God-given first teachers of our students.

Phase 2

The Archdiocese of Washington, in partnership with our school community, principals, and pastors, prayerfully developed Phase 2 of distance learning to provide meaningful learning and faith formation for our students. On March 30, 2020, our schools transitioned into Phase 2, which ensured that our students continued regular instruction provided by classroom teachers. Our schools devised multiple options to connect distance learning to students in consideration of the individual circumstances of our students. Most importantly, our schools served students' spiritual needs by providing opportunities for them to pray, worship, and learn about our faith.

Phase 3

With the decision announced by government leaders that school campuses in Maryland and the District of Columbia would remain closed beyond April 24, 2020, our schools transitioned into Phase 3 of our distance-learning plan on April 27, 2020. The remote instruction and delivery system has been expanded to consider the status of standardized testing and the prioritization of the use of instructional time that considers the critical academic standards for each grade level. Teachers remain accessible to students and parents to support the academic needs of each child.

Phase 4 Preview

With student spiritual wellbeing and academic readiness the priority, our schools are exploring programs to support students during the summer months. In compliance with government policies in regards to COVID-19, our schools will support students' transition back to campus-based instruction in the fall.

Our Approach to Grading

Grading in our distance-learning plan will look slightly different in Quarter 4.

PreK-Grade 3

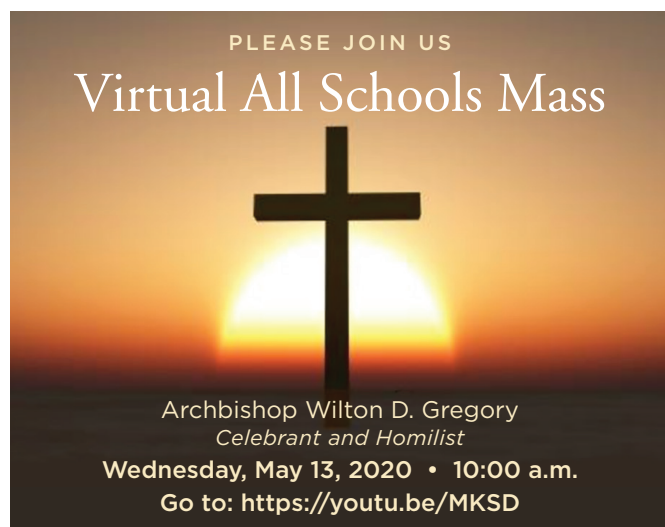
Teachers will utilize the regular progress-reporting tool on the ADW report card when grading students. However, an option for an Incomplete (IC) will be available for situations where accessibility issues affected the student's ability to complete work.

Grades 4- Grade 8

Students will receive a Pass (P), if the academic standard is met; students will receive an Incomplete (IC), if work needs to be resubmitted. Final grades will be calculated by taking into consideration grades from Quarter 1- Quarter 3 and the quality of work during Quarter 4.

Keeping Christ at the Center

Formation in the faith is the primary reason for the work we do in our Catholic schools. Now more than ever, our focus is on the family and the spiritual wellbeing of our students. This has been a particularly difficult time that has been made more challenging with families unable to attend church on Sundays or celebrate the Sacraments. Our dedication to the formation of our students has continued through daily prayer held remotely by school leaders, to strengthen the community and daily Religion classes. In addition to religion classes, teachers have provided resources to help students and their families celebrate the Sunday liturgy and the liturgical seasons in their homes in a variety of ways.



Counseling & Student Services

The social and emotional wellbeing of our students has been a very high priority during the pandemic. The efforts of our school counselors have been integral to supporting students and families as they experience direct and indirect exposures to COVID-19. From learning to cope with new routine and missing friends, to the devastation of losing a family member, our school counselors have been at-the-ready to help. Reaching out with personal phone calls to parents, coordinating online lunch bunches to maintain a sense of community, providing story times and social-emotional skills lessons, participating in student/teacher conferences to support struggling students and grief counseling are compassionately managed by our counselors. The Archdiocese of Washington has assisted in this process by providing a networking website for counselors, holding weekly counselor meetings, and providing clear guidelines and a parent permission process for remote counseling.

"I am continually amazed at the way our teachers and students have managed, even thrived, during this challenging time. We know that doesn't happen without a tremendous amount of forethought and planning by our school. The way they engage young minds is fantastic."

– Jim Delaney
Parent at St. Bartholomew School

Looking to the Future

The Archdiocese of Washington, in partnership with our pastors and principals, is looking to the future with confidence and planning for the day that our students will return to our buildings. We look forward to hallways and classrooms that are bustling with the noise, smiles and energy that make our schools feel like home to our students. Our schools will be ready with new resources and protocols that will be needed to ensure the health and safety of our students.

We are in this together – the learning continues.