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March 22, 2021

Diocese of Las Vegas Education Plan for the 2021-2022 School Year

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Having just passed the one-year mark of the pandemic's impact on our schools and families, I wish to share our plans for the 2021-2022 school year. As many of you know and have experienced, full time in-person education has been a far superior solution to hybrid models or full time online education. Our schools have managed the pandemic exceptionally well, and have followed COVID-19 mitigation procedures such that we are a model for other schools and systems.

While we are aware that community transmission numbers are subject to fluctuations, our schools have been able to provide in-person education throughout all levels of COVID-19 spread. Furthermore, as the approved vaccines continue to be distributed, we anticipate that the risk of the transmission of COVID-19 will be further reduced as we move into the summer months. Recently, the State of Nevada has lessened the restrictions on room capacities and social distancing for students, allowing for a more traditional use of our educational spaces.

In addition to the educational advantages of returning to in-person education, you may be aware of the academic studies and news stories that have been reported on the mental health of students across the country. Remote education and a lack of regular social interaction with their peers has reportedly led to incidents of suicide and mental health issues for our young people, including an increased need for counseling and other supports.

With these facts in mind, it is the expectation and plan of the Diocese of Las Vegas that all students, absent a legitimate need for isolation, who attend our Catholic schools, will return to full-time, five days per week, in-person instruction, commencing in August 2021. We realize that the pandemic has not come to an end. We are still expecting that we will have to isolate/quarantine students due to positive COVID-19 test results. In addition, there may be some families who have a demonstrated need to request full time online education. These scenarios are described on the following page.

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Isolated/Quarantined Students

Those students who are isolated as a result of a positive COVID-19 test or those students who must quarantine as a result of close contact with a positive case will have access to a live video stream of the direct instruction that occurs in their classes. However, this live stream will not be interactive, and the students at home will not be able to engage with the class. Furthermore, this live stream will only occur when students are isolated/quarantined, and will not occur for other absences (see below).

Requests for Full Time Online Learning

Families may request full-time online learning for serious medical reasons, subject to the following conditions:

- Families must notify the principal in writing (email) that they wish to apply for full-time online learning for the first trimester/semester **no later than May 15, 2021**. For subsequent trimesters/semesters, the families must notify the principal a **minimum of 60 days** in advance of the beginning of that trimester/semester. Any previous surveys or learning preference forms are obsolete and families must proactively request online learning should they wish this option.
- A **physician's note/letter** must be provided to the school principal documenting the medical reason(s) online learning is necessary. This letter must be approved by the Diocesan Medical Director.
- Any student who is approved for online learning will be required to remain in online learning for the **entire trimester or semester**.
- Approved students will have access to a live stream video of direct instruction that occurs in their classes. As mentioned above, the live stream video from the classroom will **not** be interactive, and students at home will not be able to engage with the class. Teachers will be available after the end of the school day to provide virtual support to online learners. Each school will designate the timeframe and procedures for this virtual support.
- Full time online learning students are **NOT eligible to participate** in any school co-curricular or extracurricular activities, including but not limited to: sports, clubs, performances, dances, etc. If the risk of in-person education is too high for the family, then that risk applies to other school activities as well.
- Full time online learning students will be required to take **major assessments** (e.g. tests, major written essays, final exams) **in person** at the school **outside of normal school hours** to ensure academic integrity is maintained. COVID-19 safety and mitigation

protocols will be maintained. Families must be willing and able to commit to being at the campus after school hours and possibly on weekends to take these assessments.

- Requests for full time online learning that are based upon learning style, convenience, transportation, participation in club sports/activities, etc. will be denied. In addition, all non COVID-19 isolation/quarantine absences from in-person learning will be recorded as such, even if a student observes or attempts to observe the class online during the absence.

Additional details and school-specific procedures for approved online students will be provided at a later time.

On behalf of Bishop Thomas and our Diocesan Leadership, please know that we are incredibly proud of the work and reputation of all of our schools. Our administrators, faculty, and staff are considered among the most precious treasures of our Diocese. As a result of their dedication, creativity, and resilience Catholic education in the Diocese of Las Vegas continues to thrive.

We know that this has been a challenging time for education, and we are excited about returning to an educational model that is proven to be successful for the spiritual, academic, athletic, and moral formation for our students. We will continue to monitor COVID-19 trends and follow the guidance of the SNHD, CDC, and State of Nevada as applicable.

Thank you for your continued support and commitment to Catholic education. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact my office directly. May the upcoming Easter season be a time of grace and blessings for you and your families.

In Christ,

Catherine Champion

Superintendent of Catholic Schools