



March 22, 2021

Year of St. Joseph

Dear Catholic School Community,

It's been just over a year since the COVID-19 pandemic upended our daily lives. **Our Catholic School system has emerged as a beacon of hope and excellence to our communities and the Nation**, thanks to our teachers, principals, pastors, staff, and students.

While there is still work to do, there is much to celebrate. This letter is longer than usual, but please permit me to provide you with several significant updates on the state of our Catholic Schools.

- While many are speaking about COVID-decline, our Catholic Schools are the definition of the term COVID-INCLINE! **Our students have emerged outpacing their peers in growth as measured by the NWEA MAP assessments taken this past January.** This validates all of the hard work we have done together to keep our schools open and our children learning! We are expanding our FREE direct supports for our students. In the coming weeks, you will hear updates about several initiatives aimed at providing additional intervention and enrichment opportunities. We are growing our virtual STEM after-school program, launching registration for our [FREE Summer Learning Experience](#), and continuing our partnership with [Discovery Education](#) - the first time in the archdiocese history, a fully digital curriculum in Science and Social Studies (Grs.6-8) - has been made available.
- You recently received an invite to **our new [Parent Resource Website](#) - a one-stop-destination with materials and activities to help support your child's education and your family's well-being.** Combined with the monthly workshops series, this site will include academic and social-emotional resources such as parent strategies, blogs, and webinars. Over the next few months for parents, we are launching [READY-4K](#), a national hailed research-based text message program for grades PreK- Grade 4, which has proven to increase students' learning. We are laying the foundation to begin a social-emotional computer simulation program for students by partnering with [Kognito](#). This same technology is used by our teachers this year; it is also used to train airline pilots and doctors on the front lines!

None of this is possible without our teachers, principals, staff, pastors, and the unwavering support of Cardinal Dolan. Thank You all for being Christ the teacher- ever present to our students.

- Many of you heard the U.S. Department of Education and New York State have announced they will not grant waivers for the state test. In the coming days, you will learn about how we will be implementing the shortened and streamlined state test in fulfilling this requirement. Along with the [NWEA MAP tests](#), the NYS tests are used to help your child **grow** - not as a measurement of success. **It's a "Growth**



Mindset" - meeting a child where they are and allowing their God-given talents to shine!

- Permit me also to provide an [update on COVID protocol in our schools](#). The Health & Safety Task Force meets regularly to monitor developments and evolving government guidance. Mask usage- frequent washing of hands, social distancing, monitoring for symptoms, and well-ventilated classrooms are part of our standard routine. **With vaccinations increasing and transmission on the decline, it is easy to relax the protective measures in place. However, we must remain vigilant.** The Health and Safety Task Force of the Office of the Superintendent of Schools is also examining the 6 foot to 3 foot spacing for student desks *recommendation* of the CDC last week. Once New York State and the local health departments adopt this new rule, which we will follow, we may fit more students in the classrooms. We will keep you updated on this issue. Equally, we have been working with principals on topics such as graduation protocols, revised Mass celebrations in Church, etc.
- We know staff and families may be considering trips out-of-state during this time of year. We all must adhere to the **updated travel requirements** of New York State. If you insist on traveling over the Easter break, domestic travelers will no longer be required to quarantine after entering New York from another U.S. State or U.S. Territory starting April 1. **We all have a moral obligation to protect those around us.** While no longer required, the NYS Department of Health still *recommends* quarantine after domestic travel as an added precaution.
- Similarly, if you traveled domestically or participated in high-risk activities, the Archdiocese strongly recommends but will no longer require a PCR test before your child returns to school. Mandatory quarantine remains in effect for international travelers. All travelers must continue to fill out the [Traveler Health Form](#).

As Lent ends, spring begins, and the light of the Resurrection shines, our message is one you know - we are reminded as St. Augustine tells us:

“We are an Easter people and Alleluia is our Song!”

Sincerely,

Mr Michael J. Deegan
Superintendent of Schools
Archdiocese of New York