



## DIocese of WHEELING-CHARLESTON

• P.O. Box 230, Wheeling, WV 26003 •

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### **WV Catholic Schools Announce Plan for Welcoming Students Back in August**

WHEELING— West Virginia Catholic Schools Superintendent Mary Ann Deschaine, Ed.S., has set a clear goal to welcome staff and students back into the building in August for the 2020-2021 school year.

“We are working with our principals and pastors to lay out a plan to have their students in school five days a week,” Deschaine said. “As we move forward with these plans we have been and will continue to take exhaustive measures to keep the health and safety of our children and staff a critical priority.”

The Department of Catholic Schools is excited to have the traditional five-day in school plan in place, but in order to do so they will continually be alert of federal, state, and county mandates.

Deschaine is confident that no matter what the schools face in the future they are focused and ready to “adapt, instruct, encourage, and challenge our students in the classroom or whenever necessary go to a distance learning situation without hesitation at basically the flip of the switch. That confidence, positive adaptability and flexibility is a huge life lesson for our children,” Deschaine said.

What can Catholic school parents expect this fall? Deschaine listed the following, noting this is just the beginning of the extensive list of measures the schools are taking for a healthy and secure bricks and mortar classroom, but also a compassionate and welcoming environment: detailed instructions on entrance and exit procedures; heightened cleaning measures before, during, and after school; sanitizing of surfaces and materials multiple times a day; temperature checks; masks in designated areas; creative lab and curriculum scheduling to ensure academic benchmarks are met or surpassed; lunch area and times adjusted for healthiest, safest, and most enjoyable environment; physical education restructuring to focused more about individual wellness/activities; and regulations for choir/band to be in accordance to CDC and Diocesan mandates. Services provided to the Catholic schools through the county will be based on the individual county school mandates to be announced later this summer.

“Our world is ever-changing, and our WV Catholic Schools embrace that, while at the same time continue to maintain a Christ-centered learning environment which includes a focus on the social, emotional, physical, and mental well-being of each child.

“We recognize that social emotional learning is key to the successful development of a child,” she said. “It is critical to life experiences. Making those moments for peer interaction possible is our job. Taking the responsibility to do so in the safest and most secure way is our responsibility and privilege.”

She added that classrooms in the buildings will look a bit different, as extra furnishings will be removed in order to afford the children and teachers more square footage for safe distancing.

Between now and the start of school everyone in the building will be trained on proper CDC cleaning procedures. Janitorial and maintenance staff will receive individualized training for proper cleaning techniques, how to use required additional sanitizing equipment, and how to recognize potential concerns and the action steps necessary to resolve them.

The Department of Catholic Schools for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston will be providing enhanced e-learning and distance engagement trainings for teachers in each building.

Prior to the start of school, during August 3-7, students in grades Kindergarten-10<sup>th</sup> grades will have the opportunity to take the NWEA assessment. This assessment will identify any areas where a student may need extra help, but also help staff develop prescriptive individualized educational plans.

“Our students take the NWEA assessment three times a year to assess progress and identify academic growth,” Deschaine said. “We don’t rely on a once a year assessment system. So, this August assessment will highlight what we need to do to have a successful start to our academic year.”

Deschaine said the schools will be contacting their families with enrichment opportunities to be held over the summer. Some will be subject area specific, while others will be a cross curriculum bridge program.

Guidelines for before and after care programs are also being developed, so they can be offered safely for the staff and students.

She said each building will announce its own start date, but all Catholic schools will be in session by August 24<sup>th</sup> at the latest.

“It is important to understand that no matter what the circumstance - weather, building issue, or health/safety concern – our Catholic schools continue to learn, lead, and succeed whether under the roof of the building or apart. These last few months have proven we are well equipped and prepared. We forge ahead confidently in our academic journey. We do not settle for pass-fail curriculum. We push forward and do not slack whether we are together in one building or together through an e-platform classroom. We as a Catholic school system will continue to give our students responsibility, challenges, and accountability – expectations and character that make us stand out.”

Catholic school offices across the state will continue registrations for the 2020-2021 school year through the summer. Contact your area Catholic school for more information. You can also call the Department of Catholic Schools Office at 304-233-0880 for assistance.

#### **Media Contact**

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