



July 6, 2020

Dear Archdiocesan Secondary School Families,

Recently, you received a letter of commendation from Bishop Michael Fitzgerald, who oversees Catholic education as part of his administrative and pastoral duties within our Archdiocese. With the conclusion of a challenging yet extremely successful academic year, I take this opportunity to echo his sentiments of gratitude and admiration.

From the very beginning of the pandemic, our students, families, teachers, and administrators worked together to face an unforeseen obstacle of tremendous magnitude. Thanks to everyone's perseverance and dedication, we were ahead of the curve from day one with a smooth transition to a virtual classroom model, near record high attendance rates, and continued academic excellence on the part of our young people. One of the most notable testaments to student achievement was the record-breaking \$412,139,607 in scholarships cumulatively earned by the Class of 2020 to attend colleges and universities throughout the country.

While the year proved challenging, it was also extremely successful. All of the accomplishments were possible because of the hard work of our school families, administrators, teachers, and partners in Catholic education. Thank you!

I also take this opportunity to provide an update regarding plans to reopen Archdiocesan high schools in the fall. As Bishop Fitzgerald shared, we will open on schedule and providing for the health, welfare, and safety of all members of each school community is of the utmost importance to us. As such, we continue to monitor developments relative to the coronavirus (COVID-19).

With the start of the 2020-2021 academic year on the horizon we want to assure you that we are laser focused on a plan to safely open our school buildings in September. The work of the Catholic Education Coronavirus Task Force and its recommendations to the Archdiocesan high schools are in line with directives from the Pennsylvania Department of Health and the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Each school is required to have a detailed health and safety plan in place as well as a dedicated pandemic team to assist with safety protocols.

We remain committed to keeping our school families informed. In the coming weeks, specific information will be provided outlining the plan for what this school year will look like. It will include information and considerations regarding academics, scheduling, and athletics designed to keep the health and safety of everyone paramount.

As a reminder, the Office of Catholic Education has set up a dedicated point of contact where parents and guardians can share questions. Please send messages to covid19@archphila-oce.org.

As Archbishop Nelson J. Pérez often says, "We are a people of hope." While the opening of this school year may look different, please know that we remain committed to walking with you, our school families, as we collectively navigate this ever-changing landscape. Please be assured of my continuing prayers during these summer months.

Sincerely,

Sister Maureen Lawrence McDermott, I.H.M., Ph.D.
Superintendent of Secondary Schools