



Office of the Superintendent of Schools

June 2020

Dear Friends and Families of the Diocese of Albany Catholic Schools:

These last few months have been unlike any other in our lifetimes. Collectively, we saw our comforting routines upended, and soon thereafter, we were reminded that for so many, a comforting routine had always been beyond reach. The protests and calls for civil rights — locally, nationally, and globally — make clear that our work is not done and we must continue to engage our students in these worthwhile and perhaps uncomfortable discussions during their most formative years.

Such disarray and discord in our children's lives can seem overwhelming. At the same time, we have seen tremendous solidarity, hope, and passion. We have witnessed countless examples among our own school community of teachers and students lifting others up, and going out of their way to help protect the most vulnerable and marginalized among us.

During times of strife, I am so proud our Catholic schools provide a safe haven for all students — where children not only love to learn, but also learn to love.

In the midst of chaos caused by the pandemic, our school communities have stepped it up — the true embodiment of our mission of *Higher Powered Learning* — and found ways to comfort the afflicted, as Jesus called us to do. I have been truly impressed — and grateful — for the extraordinary work of our teachers, principals, and support staff who made this school year both memorable and successful despite the hurdles. I am also extremely thankful to the parents, grandparents, and family members who partnered with us in unforeseen and astounding ways to ensure students were able to continue learning as days turned to weeks and weeks gave way to months. We simply could not have done it without you. I trust the summer respite will be a welcomed change of pace for you.



As we close out this extraordinary school year, we immediately shift our attention to the next one with so many unknowns. Nonetheless, I am looking forward to the new school year, confident that together we are capable of rising to any challenge. Whatever it may bring, we will meet it head-on and excel.

Those who know me know I am an optimist, but that optimism is deeply rooted in the reality I see every day across our Catholic schools. It is important to note that being optimistic does not mean we will wait and see what happens or heedlessly hope for the best. It means we will plan and prepare for a successful future by building on the exceptional base of talent, community pride, Catholic values, and dedication that we are blessed to have in abundance. We all have learned a tremendous amount these last few months, and it has made us stronger to meet other challenges that may lie ahead.

At their core, our Catholic schools are welcoming, supportive, and inspiring. While final decisions have not been made by government and health officials regarding on-site classes for the fall, I have no doubt our students will rise to the occasion. And our teachers and administrators will be prepared to balance a welcoming educational setting with a compassionate, careful, and secure environment. We are always driven by a higher power, and a desire for all to succeed.

While this school year comes to an end, communication with you will not. Each of our schools has an established emergency response team, and these teams have already begun developing meticulous plans and various

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instructional models for September. Such preparations will address any learning gaps, provide social emotional support, and ensure proper cleaning and disinfecting of our facilities. Things will look different, and they should with so many unexpected lessons and takeaways gleaned from this health crisis. You can be assured school principals and administrators will provide updates over the course of the summer on plans and procedures for the next school year.

Finally, and most importantly, you remain in our prayers, and we urge you to pray for others as well. We are all truly one Body of Christ and it is comforting to know we can lean on and support each other during these historic times. Together, we can overcome any challenge if we draw from our strengths with an unwavering conviction to transform everyday obstacles into everlasting opportunities.

Sincerely,



Giovanni Virigilio, Jr.
Superintendent of Catholic Schools

