

March 18, 2020



To our valued school families,

My heartfelt thoughts and prayers are with our entire Diocese of Des Moines community during these uncertain times. I continue to pray for the health of all our families, students, staff and community. I also want to reassure you that the Diocese of Des Moines Catholic Schools remains committed to student learning and the health of our school communities.

I am both humbled and grateful for the support our families have shown as we navigate these unprecedented waters. For our families, students and staff, school is a central part of our existence, but many aspects of our lives are being disrupted in the wake of COVID-19. For these next few weeks and an unknown period moving forward, many aspects of our lives will be interrupted from our usual daily routines. We will miss the experiences of shared learning, seeing our students in classrooms, connecting with colleagues, and celebrating milestones. Yet, with every challenge lies an opportunity.

We have a moral obligation as educators to ensure all student learning continues in the wake of this public health crisis. As a result, we must all redefine how and where learning happens. To this end, we are shifting to a remote learning for our students at this time. What this means is that we will transition from a traditional synchronous model of education where students learn together at the same time, to an asynchronous model where students learn apart and independently through virtual distance learning.

Rather than measuring student progress by time spent in a classroom, we will now measure student progress by completed activities and demonstrated task mastery. Each school will provide students with support, tools, resources and tasks to guide them through coursework. Students in return, show us how and if they have mastered assigned concepts by completing and submitting assigned coursework online or through completed learning packs. Each of our school administrators will provide comprehensive details and instructions regarding virtual distance learning.

We want our schools to represent stability for our students, families, and staff during this time. We will ensure that student learning continues. We will also continue to explore ways to support our most vulnerable students and families who may require specialized services.

In the meantime, what I ask of each of you is the extension of grace to yourselves and one another. We all will be asked to do things we may not understand or that are unknown. Many of us will have to do these things while also addressing life, work and home responsibilities. Such is our new reality when facing a global pandemic. However, together we will get through this, and I believe come out stronger in the end.

Should you have questions regarding our shift to this virtual distance model of learning, please contact your school administrator.

As we continue to enter uncharted waters,

A hand-drawn signature in cursive script that reads "Donna Bishop".

Donna Bishop, ED.S
Superintendent of Catholic Schools

