



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for Parents/Guardians During the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) System Closure

This document has been prepared to assist parents and guardians during the system-wide closure of the Catholic school system. If you have any additional questions, please direct them to your local school or the Office of Catholic Schools.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

Q: Why is the Catholic school system closed? Which schools does the closure affect?

A: All Catholic schools operated by the Archdiocese of Chicago have been closed indefinitely, effective Monday, March 16, 2020. This closure is in response to the spread of the COVID-19 (coronavirus) throughout greater Chicago, based upon guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), local and state health departments and other agencies. The closure affects all schools operated by the archdiocese, including schools affiliated with parishes. Independent Catholic schools (i.e. those not operated by the archdiocese) make separate decisions about closure.

Q: How long will the closure last?

A: It is not yet known how long the system-wide closure will last. Chicago Public Schools (CPS) recently announced that their closure will continue until April 20. We have not yet set a specific date for re-opening our schools, although it is our intention to resume classes once it is deemed safe to do so. We will continue to follow CDC and health department guidance in determining how long the closure will last.

Q: Are school personnel still working during the closure?

A: Yes. Principals and teachers have been asked to deliver electronic learning (e-learning) or alternative learning during the closure (see below). Other staff members may also be working. However, we have asked that non-essential school personnel work from home. Essential personnel may work at school during the closure, but for limited periods of time.

Q: Are school buildings being cleaned during the closure?

A: Yes. Each school is being thoroughly cleaned during the closure using the guidelines of the CDC.

**Q: Will school calendars be adjusted as a result of the closure?**

A: Possibly. As we do not yet know how long the closure will last, we're uncertain whether school calendars will need to be adjusted. We will inform parents if/when adjustments are made.

Q: Does the closure affect extra-curricular activities and other school events?

A: Yes. Extra-curricular activities including athletics and other school events should not take place during the closure. Schools are also not allowed to offer after-care, mom-and-tot programs or other programs.

Q: Are school lunches still being offered during the closure?

A: Select schools have decided to offer curbside delivery of lunches during the closure. Your child's school will inform you if lunches will be offered.

QUESTIONS ABOUT E-LEARNING AND ALTERNATIVE LEARNING**Q: What is e-learning and alternative learning?**

A: Electronic learning (e-learning) relates to student learning that is delivered through technology. Alternative learning refers to learning that is not delivered through technology usually through printed packets or assignments from textbooks. Each school has been asked to design and implement a rigorous e-learning plan. If e-learning is not possible, schools may implement alternative learning.

Q: How will e-learning and alternative learning take place?

A: Schools should be sending regular communications home regarding e-learning/alternative learning expectations and assignments. Students should complete e-learning/alternative learning, ideally during regular school hours, throughout the closure. E-learning/alternative learning can relate to any school subject.

Q: Will e-learning and alternative learning be of good quality?

A: Nothing can replace the teacher-student interactions at the heart of good learning. However, the Office of Catholic Schools (OCS) is working with each school to ensure the highest possible quality of e-learning/alternative learning through distributing resources, allowing sharing between schools, and encouraging innovation and creativity. It is vital that our students continue learning during this closure!

Q: Are younger children (preschool and kindergarten) expected to participate in e-learning/alternative learning?

A: Yes. Schools should be providing e-learning/alternative learning to all grade levels, including preschool and kindergarten.

Q: I am confused or have concerns about my child's e-learning/alternative learning. What do I do?



A: You should not be afraid to contact your child's teacher or principal if you have questions or concerns about e-learning/alternative learning. Our schools depend upon good communication and a spirit of partnership between teachers and parents/guardians!

Q: Will e-learning/alternative learning assignments be graded?

A: Yes. We feel it is very important that positive learning continue during the system-wide closure. As such, we are asking that assignments completed through e-learning/alternative learning be graded and counted for credit. If your child might have a legitimate difficulty completing e-learning/alternative learning work (such as difficulties accessing technology), please contact your child's school.

Q: Will standardized tests still be administered this year?

A: All Catholic school students in grades 3-8 participate in the ACT Aspire standardized test each year. Students receiving tax credit scholarships are also required to participate in the Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR). Both assessments are scheduled to take place in the late spring. It is not yet known whether these tests will still be able to be administered. Much will depend upon the length of the closure.

QUESTIONS ABOUT TUITION AND REGISTRATION

Q: Should I still pay tuition during the system-wide closure?

A: Yes. Our Catholic schools depend upon tuition revenue. We have made the commitment to continue to pay our teachers and staff during the closure. Moreover, we are continuing to work hard and deliver a high-quality education through e-learning/alternative learning.

Q: I am having difficulty paying tuition, as my own workplace has been impacted by the closure. What do I do?

A: We know that some families may have difficulties paying tuition due to the loss of pay during workplace closures. If this is happening to you, please contact your school's principal. We understand your situation and will do our very best to work with you.

Q: Should I still register for next school year?

A: Yes. All families are encouraged to proceed with registration for next school year if you have not already done so. You should work with your school's principal or designee to submit your registration materials.

Q: I know of another family that is interested in joining my child's school next year. What should they do?



A: All schools are registering new families for next year, in spite of the closure. You should encourage any interested families to contact your school's principal or designee.

Q: Are schools still hiring staff for next year during the closure?

A: Yes. We are working with each school to ensure that teachers and staff are hired for the upcoming school year. Some of our schools are seeking principals as well. These searches are also continuing during the closure.

Q: What if I have other questions?

A: If you have any other questions, please contact your child's school or the Office of Catholic Schools.

In all things, remember that God is watching over us and blessing our efforts. Mary, Mother of God, *Pray for Us*.