

March 22, 2020

Dear St. Didacus families,

What a week it was. So much change, so much different information coming in from several different sources, and finally on Thursday we all got the order to “shelter in place” for at least a little while. I hope you’re all staying healthy, safe, and are heeding the warnings about personal contact.

Our wonderful teachers have been working overtime to make sure that your child’s education continues with as little disruption as possible. Naturally, not being able to access the building and having to do all lessons and all classwork online is a rather large disruption, but our hope is to minimize any further breaks from our normal routine. Normal lesson plans are done months in advance, but our teachers have done all of this in the span of ten days. We are so lucky to have such a dedicated staff!

In that respect, **it’s important to note that school is still in session**, regardless of how or where the lessons are given (at school or online). In order to ensure that your child has completed the entire year of instruction so that they will be able to move up to the next grade level, they must fulfill what is required of them (attendance, completing assignments, etc.) during the current year. This is why the Diocese has instituted the Distance Learning Program - to fulfill the educational requirements of the students’ current grade level, allowing them to move on to the next.

Here are just a few things you need to know about:

**Spirit Day each week:** I’m working on putting together a “Spirit Day” for each week of Distance Learning! This is where the kids could participate in some fun passive activities to help them still feel connected to their classmates. Spirit Day will be on Wednesdays. This Wednesday, **everyone who wants to participate should wear their class color shirt!** It would be fun if you take a photo of them while they’re doing their school work in their spirit wear, and send it to me. I’ll post them on Facebook so the kids can feel connected to each other. This is one way to add some fun and familiarity for our students!

**Daily assignments:** Every teacher has made herself/himself available on a daily basis from 8am to noon to answer your questions, or your concerns about each day’s lessons or homework, and everything else via our Zoom program. They’re also happy to answer your questions at any time via email. We understand that everyone’s situation is unique, and each child has different needs. Thus, we know it’s important that we be very flexible with due dates. We do ask that **every child signs in each day via Daily Starter** in your teacher’s Google Classroom. Most everyone has been doing this, and it’s been very helpful.

**Chromebooks:** If anyone is having a difficult time with Distance Learning because of a lack of resources (mainly that they don't have a computer at home that their child can access), we still have a limited number of Chromebooks that we can loan out. We can do one per family at this time, but we would need to hear from you **no later than Tuesday** (March 24th). On Wednesday, I'll start loaning out the remaining Chromebooks to those who have told me they need a second one. So please let me know as soon as possible if you're in need.

**Tuition:** A few people have asked about whether the school is making allowances regarding K-8 tuition payments. Tuition remains the same, but if you are having a financial hardship at this time, please contact me to make arrangements for an alternate payment plan. As you may know, our school operates (as most Catholic schools do) on very thin margins, and the vast majority of your tuition payments go toward the salaries of the teachers and staff. So while we cannot operate without tuition payments, we will make alternate plans available for those who are truly in need. While some people's incomes have not been affected, I know that others indeed have been, and until some relief is provided by our state and federal governments, those who are experiencing true financial hardship need to know that we'll help in whatever way we feasibly can. So please contact me directly via email: [christine.dean@stdidacusparishschool.org](mailto:christine.dean@stdidacusparishschool.org). For those who have been paying in person, please contact Karen Patterson at [bookkeeper@stdidacusparishschool.org](mailto:bookkeeper@stdidacusparishschool.org).

Also: if you've paid any other fees for things like hot lunch, field trips, etc. your account will be credited towards your tuition payments by the amount you've already paid.

**Preschool:** As I mentioned in my previous letter, Distance Learning for preschoolers is still being discussed at the Diocese, but until we get an answer from them, the preschool remains temporarily closed. At a preschooler's age, Distance Learning is not a very effective option, simply because of their educational level.

I'll keep everyone updated as circumstances change, but in the meantime, if you have any pressing questions or concerns that your child's teacher cannot answer, feel free to reach out to me.