



March 20, 2020

Dear Parents, Guardians, and Students:

I hope that this message finds your families well and healthy at this difficult and challenging time. Let me begin by thanking you for your patience, support and understanding during the period of this national crisis. Events can be frightening and certainly filled with anxiety. I am sure that each of you has many questions and concerns about the continuity of education for your children. Let me try to calm some of these fears.

Today, Friday, March 20th, teachers are attending sessions that will allow them to conduct remote learning from their homes. Your students will be the recipients of this learning starting on **Monday, March 23, 2020**. In order to assist you in managing the newness of this system, I am setting into place a structure for schools to enact that will help to frame each day's learning activities. This structure will include an invitation to start the day with prayer, followed by several block sessions of time dedicated to teacher/student remote work online. There will be morning and afternoon sessions, with an appropriate forty-minute break for lunch and family time as well as a break during the day (at the school's discretion) for teachers to prepare lessons.

When they are not teaching, teachers will be a resource to you over e-mail and online platforms to answer questions and concerns about your child(ren)'s learning. They will be available, according to their schedules, which they will share with you, between the normal working hours of the school. Principals will be available throughout the day, as they would be normally if the physical school building were open. Over the course of the day today, your principals will share the schedule of the remote learning school. Please make certain to explain that schedule with your children and to keep it posted throughout your home.

I ask that, as the parents and the guardians, you continue to partner with your principals and teachers to assure them a positive, safe, and structured learning environment at home. Here are some tips to create an effective learning environment for your child(ren) while being educated remotely:

- ❖ **Create Sleep Schedules.** Try to establish a normal sleep routine for your child(ren) – set bedtimes and wake times early in order to be prepared for the morning.
- ❖ **Feed the Brain.** Make sure that there is breakfast or snack available in the morning for the child(ren). Fresh fruit, a carbohydrate, and a protein will help to create a balanced breakfast. For parents on the go, perhaps a yogurt, fruit, or cereal.



- ❖ **Quiet Spaces.** Provide, as much as possible, a quiet, well-lit space for your child to learn. It is important that students focus clearly on what is being presented with as few distractions as possible.
- ❖ **Prep in Advance.** Have laptops, chrome books, or tech devices fully charged before the start of schoolwork the next day. The learning environment should be kept consistent from day-to-day. Keeping learning in the same room provides the comfort of a classroom and helps to separate the home and school environment as much as possible.
- ❖ **Set Classroom Rules.** Set the rules with the children. Make sure that they know they are not to text their friends, listen to music, or take phone calls (unless there is an emergency) during academic time. The same rules of the school should apply to remote learning.
- ❖ **Device Sharing.** It is understood and expected that some parents may be sharing devices with their child(ren) since many parents are also called to work from home. If this is the case, please let your principal know of any complications due to extenuating circumstances from day to day. However, please make sure that you try to set up a sharing schedule with your child(ren).
- ❖ **Other Resources.** For those students who like to use pen, pencil, and paper, and those who may be tactile, have scrap paper and plenty of paper-based materials at a work station with the students.
- ❖ **Keep in Touch with Teachers and Principals.** Keep in touch with your child(ren)'s teachers often, and always provide a phone number at which time they can reach you so as to provide feedback and support. Please note that teachers are not required to respond during after school hours, but will return calls or e-mails when they return to the remote environment the next morning. Please understand that this is to provide a quality of life to our teachers and principals so that, they, too can enjoy and dedicate time to their families.
- ❖ **Adhere to the Schedule.** The most important aspect of remote learning is to make certain that your children adhere to the schedule and to be sure to be on time for the start of the day. In order for this new system to work, students must be logged in on-time, as if they were expected to arrive to school at the beginning of each day.

There will be certain grades that may be more e-mail based, with correspondences and work assigned from teachers to be completed in workbooks and textbooks. Parents, guardians, and older siblings are asked to help monitor the learning that is happening and to ensure that each child's work is completed until an appropriate time (TBD) when teachers would be able to assess the work. This is especially true of those children who are in the early childhood grades. Please be in touch with your individual school communities on a weekly basis to determine next steps with any questions or concerns.



Please know that we are all here to assist you through this process and to make it as less stressful as possible for all those charged with home-based learning. Together, with our fine teachers and principals, we will work through this. There will, undoubtedly, be bumps, challenges, and hurdles for all of us, but I ask for your patience and continued support.

May God bless each of you and your families.

Sincerely,

John T. Riley
Regional Superintendent of Schools
Catholic School Region of the Northwest/South Bronx