



**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT ~ CATHOLIC SCHOOL SUPPORT SERVICES**

ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF BROOKLYN

310 PROSPECT PARK WEST

BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11215

718-965-7300 FAX: 718-965-7353

## **Memorandum**

**To:** Catholic Academy and Parish School Principals  
**From:** Thomas Chadzutko, Ed.D.  
Superintendent ~ Catholic School Support Services  
**Re:** *Weekly Update for the Week Beginning August 24, 2020*  
**Date:** Monday, August 24, 2020

---

### **Introduction:**

Last week, I had an opportunity to catch up on some television, shows I programmed on my DVR. I came across a documentary on the History Channel, which focused on the women, men and children of the Oregon Trail. Many of us have played the video game, Oregon Trail and for me personally, I've lost every time. But as I watched the documentary, it helped me to put into perspective a couple of things, which could apply to our current situation. Those who set out on the Oregon Trail had their eyes set on getting to the Pacific Coast. As we set out this week, we have our eyes set on the re-opening of our Catholic Academies and Parish Schools. The women and men on the Oregon Trail, packed their wagons, with what they thought would be needed for the journey West. For us, we've developed our re-opening plans, addressing the issues surrounding the re-opening, posted the plans onto our websites, and met with parents and faculty last week. So far so good! But as the women and men traveled West, they hit bumps along the way, however, they never deviated from their plan to reach the West Coast. We have hit a few bumps along the way as well; parents and teachers pushing back, and receiving more questions than we had answers for, at the time. Through it all, we are persevering toward "opening day". Just as those pioneers along the Oregon Trail did not know what they would face, as they moved ahead, we too live in uncertain times, not knowing if the metrics might change, or if the Governor might make a decision not to open schools, or if we will need to adjust our schedules.

No matter what happens between now and September 9, 2020, one thing is for sure, each of you has a re-opening plan, and together we will adjust along the way, being prepared for whatever comes our way.

Perseverance, faith and hope is what got the women, men and children, traveling the Oregon Trail, to the West Coast.

This week let us focus on perseverance. I offer you this prayer to guide you this week:

**JESUS, I TURN TO YOU**

*For Your help when I am in pain,  
For hope greater than despair,  
Jesus, I turn to You.*

*For comfort when I am lonely,  
For happiness though it seems far away,  
Jesus, I turn to You.*

*For direction at every crossroad,  
For faith when I am afraid,  
Jesus, I turn to You.*

*For forgiveness when I fail,  
For peace that is Your gift,  
Jesus, I turn to You.*

*For openness to the fullness of grace,  
For a heart overflowing with love,  
Jesus, I turn to You. Amen.*

**St. Thomas Aquinas Distance Learning Program:**

On Friday, August 21, 2020, the first of four information sessions took place, regarding St Thomas Aquinas Distance Learning Program. Unfortunately, principals might have been contacted by parents, who registered and were unable to access the webinar.

The response and registration for the information sessions has been unprecedented. To clarify, Zoom registrations exceeded our webinar attendee limit. The cause of the overbooking has been resolved, as we move forward with additional meetings.

To help provide all with the information covered, and an opportunity to join a live session, additional webinars have been added. We are also making the recorded session available on the St Thomas Aquinas Distance Learning Program website early next week.

Updated and additional webinars:

- Monday Aug 24<sup>th</sup> 2:00pm Please register here: [Zoom registration for Monday 8/24 2pm](#)
- Tuesday Aug 25<sup>th</sup> 2:00pm Please register here: [Zoom registration for Tuesday 8/25, 2:00pm](#)  
(\*FYI – the announced session on Monday 8/24 at 6pm is closed, with registration at capacity)

The St Thomas Aquinas Distance Learning Program website is now open, and contains information, FAQ's and a "contact us" link, for specific and personal questions. Please visit <https://stthomasaquinasbq.org/> or email [info@stthomasaquinasbq.org](mailto:info@stthomasaquinasbq.org).

## **St. Thomas Aquinas Distance Learning Program:**

(continued)

During Friday's presentation, it was mentioned that there is the possibility of students from the St. Thomas Aquinas Distance Learning Program re-entering the Catholic Academy and Parish School after the 1<sup>st</sup> Trimester. As noted previously, the creation of the program was to assist Catholic Academies and Parish School principals in offering a full distance learning program, for those families who wished this option. It also allowed for the Catholic Academy and Parish School to retain 90% of the tuition revenue and maintain a connection between the families and the Catholic Academy and Parish School.

The full return of all our students to the Catholic Academy and Parish School is the ultimate goal. While now you are focusing on the re-opening plans you've developed, there will be a time later in the 1<sup>st</sup> Trimester for you to, if needed, to alter your plans. As noted previously, your re-opening plan is a living document and needs to be assessed on a regular basis, as new information comes in from New York City, New York State and the Center for Diseases Control (CDC).

While we are not asking you to fully absorb the students from the St. Thomas Aquinas Distance Learning Program now, we are asking you to begin to think down the road of how to re-engage those children and families into the Catholic Academies and Parish Schools. Please note, this is not something which needs to be addressed now, it does however need to be on your radar. We will assist and support, continuing to work with you, moving forward.

We never know when the course will need to change, or occur, however we need to always be ready for them, as you have continuously been doing and adjusting, over the past five months.

## **On Going Recruitment and Registration:**

We have heard several times last week, that our Catholic Academy/Parish School enrollment is at-capacity, based on the re-opening plans. While that may be the case now, it is important to confirm that all families are actually returning, on September 9, 2020. Budgets are already stretched, and we cannot afford to open with less students than projected.

It is imperative that you continue to recruit students and make every effort **not** to turn families away. We have an opportunity to capitalize on the families from public school, who are not currently satisfied with the options afforded them.

We have stated many times, that we will work with you to accommodate any overflow.

Many principals and Boards of Directors have been very creative with the re-imagining of their available space. Let us assist you in this creative use of space and programmatic scheduling.

Please, turn **no-one** away from enrolling in a Catholic Academy and Parish School.

**Parent Student Handbook Template:**

Attached, please find the latest draft of the Parent/Student Handbook Template.

This will be discussed in more detail during the local EPAC meetings this week.

**Update on Metro Cards and Bus Transportation:**

Please see below the statement regarding metro cards and bus transportation, forwarded from the Office of Nonpublic Schools:

*For the most part, OPT used last year's data to distribute MetroCards since school leaders were not in their bldgs. since March and didn't want to chance relying on new data only. Some schools along with New/Moving/Changing schools make updates during the summer to their student data which was also considered. Schools for the most part do know to take care of these things every year to ensure busing and MetroCards are in place.*

*The data was pulled from NPSIS early last week. So, the info is pretty present if anybody made updates.*

*Here is the information regarding busing:*

*Yellow bus transportation is not available prior to the opening of NYC DOE public schools, currently scheduled to begin [on September 10, 2020](#).*

*NYC DOE are finalizing plans for additional forms of transportation; additional information is forthcoming.*

*To reiterate:*

- *We are currently assessing student busing and transportation options for fall 2020.*
- *We are prioritizing identifying transportation options for students for whom transportation is mandated on their IEPs.*
- *We are working to make other options available like the MTA and TLC.*
- *We will provide an update when it is available.*

*Please, review the Reopening Plan that the DOE submitted to New York State:*

*<https://www.schools.nyc.gov/school-year-20-21/district-school-reopening-plan-submission-to-nysed>*

*As we keep mentioning we are providing information in real time when we receive it.*

*Have a great weekend.*

***Thanks***

***Eric T. Weinbaum***

*Executive Director for Operations*

*Office of Nonpublic Schools,*

*NYC Department of Education*

*65 Court Street, Suite 922*

*Brooklyn, New York 11201*

*718-935-2524 (Office)*

*[eweinba@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:eweinba@schools.nyc.gov)*

### **How to Initiative SSBA Orders:**

The attached provides you with the necessary information on how to initiative SSBA ordering.

Should you have any questions, please contact Joan McMaster.

### **2020-2021 Annual Goal Setting Template for the Continuous Improvement Plan for Instructional and Administrative Goals:**

As we move closer to school opening, we are requesting that all principals submit their goals for the 2020-2021 school year, to their District Superintendent, no later than Monday, August 31<sup>st</sup>.

As previously shared, all schools are to use the *Continuous Improvement Plan for Instructional and Administrative Goals* template for submission. Also as previously noted, it is necessary for all school leaders to incorporate the Coronavirus Offsite Instructional Plan, now known as the Continuity of Learning Plan, into any updated plans. This is necessary, if we are mandated to revert to a full-school remote/ distance learning program, by New York State. Your Spiritual Goal should be prepared on the same template, used in previous years.

All three documents are enclosed, plus a *Goal-Setting Questions to Consider* file, with this Weekly Update. Any questions should be referred to your District Superintendent.

### **Summary:**

If anyone has ever seen the remnants of the Oregon Trail, the first thing that comes to mind are the ruts carved in solid rock. These ruts, as they are called, are a result of years of traveling over the same place. Many of these ruts are very deep, but occasionally you will come across a rut that is relatively shallow. This is where groups of travelers took a different route.

We have been traveling the same intense route for the past five months, with no end in sight, as we continue to prepare for September 9, 2020. We are all stressed, anxious, fearful and tired.

This week, I ask you to get off the main trail and take a detour, a day or two for yourself with family and friends (of course wear a mask and social distance). We need this break from the constant frontline action.

Just as the travelers on the Oregon Trail made it to the West Coast, we will together make it to the first day of the new academic year, on September 9, 2020.