



Catholic Schools
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School Closure Due to COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Questions and Answers

*This document has been prepared to assist school leaders with potential questions to school closures due to COVID-19 (coronavirus). **This document is for internal purposes only and should not be shared with others.** If you have any additional questions, please contact your regional director or the superintendent of schools.*

Q: What does the closure announcement mean?

A: All archdiocesan-operated schools (including all schools affiliated with parishes) should close, effective Monday, March 16. This closure should be essentially handled like a “snow day” (with some caveats, see below); no classes should be offered, and all extra-curricular activities (including athletics) should also be cancelled.

Q: How long will the closure last?

A: It is not yet known how long the system-wide closure will last. The archdiocese is in close contact with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) regarding the coronavirus outbreak. The system will be re-opened when it is determined to be safe to do so. We should plan for this closure to last for some time (perhaps several weeks).

Q: How should the closure be communicated to parents?

A: The OCS has delivered a communication directly to parents. It is recommended that you also distribute the parent communication through your own internal channels. We also recommend that you place an announcement on your website and main office voicemail regarding the closure.

Q: Can extra-curriculars and other events still take place during the closure?

A: No. All extra-curricular activities and other school events should be postponed or cancelled during the closure.

Q: Can after-care programs still operate during the closure?

A: No. Although many schools allow after-care programs to operate during snow days, these programs should not function during this closure. *There should be no students on school campuses during the closure.*

**Q: Can teachers come to school during the closure? What about other staff?**

A: Schools should be limited to essential staff only during the closure. Teachers should not come to school during the closure. Principals and other select staff may visit the school for short periods, as needed. Custodial and maintenance staff should regularly check on the school building and should spend time performing extra cleaning during the closure (see below).

Q: Should the school be cleaned during the closure?

A: Yes. We recommend that extra cleaning be performed during the closure period. We recommend focusing on surfaces, bathrooms, eating areas and high-touch areas (e.g. banisters, doorknobs, etc.). Intense cleaning or “deep cleaning” is not necessary unless a confirmed case of coronavirus has been discovered amongst your school population or staff.

Q: Should we deliver instruction remotely during the closure?

A: Yes. You should enact your electronic learning (e-learning) or alternative learning plan during the school closure. This will enable students to continue completing work. Guidance from the OCS was distributed about e-learning/alternative learning on March 12 (see the relevant [special broadcast](#)). Please contact your RD if you need help with e-learning/alternate learning.

If you have a spring break or other scheduled holiday during the closure period, you need not participate in e-learning/alternative learning during these scheduled times.

Q: Are teachers and staff expected to work remotely during the closure?

A: Yes. Teachers and staff should work remotely, to the degree that they can, during any cancelled school day. Teachers should assist students with e-learning or alternative learning during regular school hours. You may wish to convene meetings with staff members virtually during the closure. The closure should not be seen as vacation time (save for during previously scheduled breaks). *You should communicate this expectation to your teachers and staff.*

Q: Should parents still pay tuition during the closure?

A: Yes. While the school is closed, we are attempting to deliver instruction remotely (via e-learning and alternative learning). We should still attempt to collect tuition from families.

Q: What happens if I use up all my emergency days?

A: The Illinois State Department of Education (ISBE) requires at least 176 instructional days per year. Catholic schools are asked to plan for at least 180 days and should also schedule 5 emergency days. It is possible that this closure may last longer than the 4 “extra” Archdiocese of Chicago instructional days and 5 emergency days. If this occurs and the closure continues, we expect to hear guidance from ISBE about potential adjustments to the required instructional days.



Q: Will teachers and staff still be paid during the closure? What about benefits?

A: Teachers and staff (including hourly and part-time staff) will still be paid during the closure, based upon their regular hours. Benefits will continue during the closure.

Q: What about temporary employees and other special cases?

A: For temporary employees or any other complex employment situations, please contact your human resources manager or RD.

Q: Can I ask teachers or staff to attend gatherings during the closure if they are away from school?

A: No. Teachers and staff can work from home, but should not be asked to go to other sites.

Q: I have a scheduled professional development day. Should I proceed with this day?

A: You could attempt to deliver the PD remotely (to teachers/staff in their homes). If this is not possible, you should cancel the PD day.

Q: Will the OCS remain open during the closure?

A: Yes. It is possible the OCS (and the Archdiocesan Pastoral Center) will close, but staff will still work remotely. You should be able to reach OCS staff via email or cell, even in the case of a closure.

Q: I am in the midst of hiring teachers or staff for next year. Can I still interview people during the closure?

A: You can perform interviews remotely, but not in person. We still anticipate releasing the teacher contract template in early April (as previously announced).

Q: What if I have other questions?

A: You should use your regional director as your main point of contact for other questions.

THROUGHOUT THE CLOSURE, BE CERTAIN TO CAREFULLY MONITOR EMAILS FOR ADDITIONAL ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE OFFICE OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS. If you need assistance accessing your archdiocesan email account, please contact the IT help desk at 312.534.5227.

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