



DIOCESE OF ORANGE
DEPARTMENT OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
13280 CHAPMAN AVENUE, GARDEN GROVE, CA 92840

29 July 2020

Dear OC Catholic School Families,

In light of the revised school re-opening guidelines issued by California Governor Gavin Newsom on Friday, July 17, we have decided to move the first day of school to Tuesday, September 8 for all of our Catholic elementary schools. This decision was made in consultation with our bishops, diocesan leadership team, and our school principals, and was based on several factors listed below:

- Orange County is currently on the Governor's Covid-19 Watch List which means his office is monitoring the county for increasing cases and hospitalizations. We believe delaying our start date gives us an additional two weeks for OC to be removed from the watch list.
- We will use this additional time for focused staff development and training.
- The new start date gives us additional time for procurement of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and items that have been backordered.

Most importantly, pushing back the start date allows us time to meet the newly revised state re-opening guidelines and begin the school year fully prepared for in-person traditional model teaching. This goal is in concert with our parent survey results which indicated that most parents (83%) prefer the traditional model in the Fall. This goal is also in alignment with the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP): **"the AAP strongly advocates that all policy considerations for the coming school year should start with a goal of having students physically present in school.** The importance of in-person learning is well-documented, and there is already evidence of the negative impacts on children because of school closures in the Spring of 2020."

While we feel the safe return of our students to campus is essential for the academic, spiritual, emotional, and social well-being and development of our children, we must be mindful of the challenges that come within this pandemic. **Please note that if our county is not ready by September 8, all of our schools will be prepared to open with instruction in a distance learning format.**

Since March, we have looked forward to the day we welcome you and your students back to campus. Our children have been loved, protected, and formed by you during these unprecedented times, and it is our honor and privilege to serve as your partners in their education and formation. Thank you for being part of our Catholic school community.

In mission,

Erin C.O. Barisano, Ed. D.
Superintendent of Schools
Diocese of Orange