

NOTES FROM THE OFFICE

April 8, 2020



The picture above was created by **Rayanna Mello** (Gr. 3) to share with the school community during Holy Week. Thank you, Rayanna!

Distance learning continues, and I feel fortunate that I've Zoomed with classes, seeing most students, met with teachers, and continued this alternate form of education. I hope students and parents are keeping a journal or record of life these days- mine includes new, altered experiences with family members, students, school families and staff, as well as new phrases or phrases that now have a different connotation- think zoom, zoomed, zooming. We are continuing to move forward with distance learning, and I feel that SPXS, like other Catholic schools, has demonstrated its abilities to be creative and nimble and to adapt to change- in this instance a major shift in life for all!

Guidelines from the **DESE** (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education) and the diocesan **Catholic Schools' Office** related to distance learning are attached. These are guidelines only- recommendations for implementation by each school individually. The SPXS community has been working since March 16th to not only meet- but exceed- these guidelines. Thanks to everyone for their efforts!

I am asking you to complete a short **survey** related to distance learning. Teachers and parents have truly worked in partnership with each other to support the students. I would like input from parents, so am asking you to take a few minutes to complete this survey. If you have Middle School students, and they have some thoughts, please include. Thank You.

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf5keVSDX2N_UackTgasAw1od3VxQT1nIFAnjvA87bnyBOlrQ/viewform?usp=sf_link

The **FACE** application process, though the deadline had passed, will be available to those who might need assistance now for 2020-2021, the website is <https://www.face-dfr.org/how-to-apply/> . If you completed the FACE application already, but your financial situation has changed- go back to your application- and make a notation in the Comments box.

During **Holy Week** this year our lives seem to mirror the experience of Jesus and his disciples. We are currently living in a time full of uncertainty, with pressures that weigh us down. As we remember the Last Supper, Christ's suffering and crucifixion, and the despair of his followers, we also know the joy that comes with his resurrection. May the joy we feel at Easter remind us that this period in our lives will also pass. My prayers go out to all members of our community. May those who are sick, improve quickly, and may all others remain safe and healthy. Happy Easter to all!

Please join Fr. Paul, live from the parish Facebook page, for services in our school chapel on Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday:

Holy Thursday 7:00 pm
Good Friday 3:00 pm
Holy Saturday 7:00 pm Easter Vigil
Easter Sunday 10:30 am Easter Sunday Mass



Recommendations for Extended School Closure

from DFR Catholic Schools Office

- All schools will observe the following no school dates: Good Friday, April 10th; April Break, April 20-24th.
- All schools will maintain their scheduled last day of school as set forth in their school calendars. No school will be required to add any school days at the end of their school year due to mandatory closures.

Please note that the following is a set of recommendations and suggestions and not requirements. We encourage schools to implement them as needed to provide for the unique needs of your individual schools.

Elementary Schools

- **Option to reduce remote learning one day a week.** It is recommended that each school could choose one day in the school week when teachers will not provide direct teaching so that they can use that day as a planning day. This should provide some stress relief for both teachers and students, giving each a break during the school week so that weekends can be fully enjoyed by families and teachers. Teachers could suggest fun activities like pleasure reading, playing games, doing puzzles, going outside for play if appropriate on this fifth day during the school week. Another alternative could be to schedule your special area teachers to present activities on this fifth day, freeing up the regular classroom teachers.
- **Time limits should be communicated to school families regarding hours that teachers will respond to an email concern or request.** It is highly recommended that time limits be placed on teacher-parent correspondence. Schools are free to determine the best time restrictions for their own school communities, but it is important to put some type of time restrictions on this. Any emails received on a weekend should be answered on a limited basis or on the next scheduled school day. Administrators should support teachers in adhering to these time restrictions for email access in order to help maintain a healthy frame of mind for our teachers by making sure these restrictions are communicated to all families.
- **Marking periods**--Second trimester was scheduled to have been completed around March 13th (for many schools) which was the last day our schools were in session. Schools may make the decision to send out report cards as usual for the second trimester work completed or include the work being completed now with the second trimester work so that students will receive a final grade at the end of the school year. Schools should include grading for the remote learning activities and assignments that are being completed during this mandatory school closing period.

- **MAP Assessments scheduled for May 26-June 12**--If school closure is extended to this late in the school year, we will make a decision about these assessments by early May.
- **Students engaging in remote learning**--We recommend that every effort be made to reach those students that are not engaging in the remote learning being offered by the school to determine if there is a need that should be addressed. Calls and communication to parents should be documented by the school in these cases and can include language that indicates the student could be in jeopardy of failure or retention if non-engagement continues.
- **Instruction time suggestions**--Schools can create the most ideal daily and weekly schedule for educator-directed teaching that is balanced with student self-directing learning that works for the school. Every school has unique needs and availability in regards to scheduling instruction time with students. Reviewing the recent DESE Remote Learning Recommendations for Public Schools (see below), might be helpful for school administrators as they work at finding the best balance for their school community.
- **Use of free resources**--Schools are reminded that all online learning platforms that are being used during this time must meet confidentiality and student privacy standards. If you have a question about this issue, please contact Bill Milot for some guidance. Also, please be sure your teachers are aware that all resources that are being offered for free right now may only be available for a cost after this crisis is over.

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has released recent Remote Learning Recommendations for the public schools. This guidance is a “set of *recommendations* and does not constitute a requirement for any district or school.” DESE encourages districts and schools to “modify... customize our recommendations for individual districts and schools”.

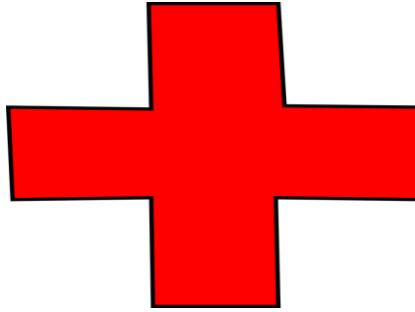
Despite DESE’s recommendation that academic content should “focus on reinforcing skills already taught this year and applying and deepening those skills”, our diocese strongly feels that in addition to reinforcing prior learned skills, our students deserve to receive instruction and practice of new academic content and skills in order to continue their grade level academic growth.

Diocesan schools will continue to assess and grade student work in the most appropriate way possible to provide students and parents with feedback on how well they are understanding the content as well as provide teachers with the necessary information to inform their decisions about moving forward with the academic content.

DESE's Remote Learning Recommendations for Public Schools

released on 3-26-20

- Support students to engage in meaningful and productive learning for approximately half the length of a regular school day.
- This learning is recommended to take place via a combination of educator-directed learning and student self-directed learning.
- Remote learning can encompass a wide variety of learning opportunities.
- Examples of remote learning tools include large-group video or audio conference calls, 1:1 phone or video calls, email, work packets, projects, reading lists, online learning platforms, and other resources to effectively engage with students.
- Schools should ensure all online learning platforms meet confidentiality and student privacy standards.
- Components of a remote learning schedule:
 - Opportunity to meet with one or more educators multiple times per week.
 - Access to multiple hours per day of academic content directed by educators.
 - Time each day for physical activity.
 - Additional daily time for enrichment activities like the arts.
 - Plan time away from the screen for the students.
- WGBH and WGBY have partnered with PBS to offer online resources for schools. DESE has compiled a [list of educational resources](#) for students, families, and educators.



From Nurse Annie

Concern over COVID-19 can make children and families anxious. While we don't know to what extent the disease may spread here in the United States, we do know that it is contagious, that the severity of illness can vary from individual to individual, and that there are steps we can take to prevent the spread of infection. Acknowledging some level of concern, without panicking, is appropriate and can result in taking actions that reduce the risk of illness. Helping children cope with anxiety requires providing accurate prevention information and facts without causing undue alarm.

Specific Guidelines

Remain calm and reassuring.

Children will react to and follow your verbal and nonverbal reactions.

Remind them that you and the adults at their school are there to keep them safe and healthy.

Let your children talk about their feelings and help reframe their concerns into the appropriate perspective.

Make yourself available

Children may need extra attention from you and may want to talk about their concerns, fears, and questions.

It is important that they know they have someone who will listen to them; make time for them.

Tell them you love them and give them plenty of affection.

Avoid excessive blaming

When tensions are high, sometimes we try to blame someone.

It is important to avoid stereotyping any one group of people as responsible for the virus.

Monitor television viewing and social media

Limit television viewing or access to information on the Internet and through social media.

Try to avoid watching or listening to information that might be upsetting when your children are present.

Speak to your child about how many stories about COVID-19 on the Internet may be based on rumors and inaccurate information.

Talk to your child about factual information of this disease—this can help reduce anxiety.

Maintain a normal routine to the extent possible

Keep to a regular schedule, as this can be reassuring and promotes physical health.

Encourage your child to eat a balanced diet, get enough sleep, and exercise regularly; this will help them develop a strong immune system to fight off illness

Be honest and accurate, while age appropriate

Children can be told this disease is thought to be spread between people who are in close contact with one another—when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

It is also thought it can be spread when you touch an infected surface or object, which is why it is so important to protect yourself.

Know the symptoms of COVID-19

The CDC believes these symptoms appear in a few days after being exposed to someone with the disease or as long as 14 days after exposure:

Fever

Cough

Shortness for breath

For some the symptoms are like having a cold; for others they are more severe/life threatening

Review and model basic hygiene and healthy lifestyle practices for protection.

Encourage your child to practice every day good hygiene—simple steps to prevent spread of illness:

Wash hands multiple times a day for at least 20 seconds (singing Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star slowly takes about 20 seconds).

Cover their mouths with a tissue when they sneeze or cough and throw away the tissue immediately, or sneeze or cough into the bend of their elbow. Do not share food or drinks.

Practice giving fist or elbow bumps instead of handshakes. Fewer germs are spread this way.

Giving children guidance on what they can do to prevent infection gives them a greater sense of control over disease spread and will help to reduce their anxiety.