



DIOCESE OF COLORADO SPRINGS

OFFICE OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

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Dear Catholic School Parents/Guardians,

It is my sincere joy to introduce myself as the new Superintendent of Catholic Schools for the Diocese of Colorado Springs. I bring 19 years of experience as a Catholic school principal with additional teaching experience in both Catholic and public schools. I was raised in a large Catholic family with parents who made sacrifices to have their children attend our parish Catholic school, St. Mary Catholic School, in Big Rapids, MI. I was also blessed to graduate from Aquinas College in Grand Rapids, MI. My faith was nurtured and strengthened through my family and these school communities.

My passion for Catholic education is based on my belief that my love for education is a gift from God and He has called me to join this gift with my love for the Catholic faith. I follow in the footsteps of our outgoing Superintendent Holly Goodwin and the many dedicated religious sisters, brothers and priests who were committed to evangelizing and educating each generation of children. There are many challenges to continuing this work given our current world. I am committed to providing an academically rigorous and doctrinally sound education and faith formation designed to strengthen each child's union with Christ and his Church.

I want to celebrate the success of our Catholic school administrators and teachers over the last school year. Our dedicated Catholic school teachers returned to in-person learning in August of 2020 despite many unknown factors. Parents and schools worked together to ensure a safe, healthy environment where students could grow spiritually, academically, physically and emotionally. Our Catholic schools modeled how to use science and data to put children first during this unusual time.

Based on the latest recommendations and data from the state of Colorado, the Diocesan schools are planning to return to normal in-person learning for the 2021-2022 school year. We will not require students to remain in cohorts across the school. We will not require the use of masks; however, masks may be worn by those who feel more comfortable doing so. We will discontinue quarantines for healthy/non-symptomatic students and staff. Should a student or staff member test positive for COVID, or are presumed positive, they will be asked to isolate at home for 10 days before returning to school. We will not require COVID immunizations for staff or students. At this point more than 70% of our Diocesan school employees are immunized and we know that some of our eligible students are receiving the vaccine. We will continue to support the decisions of parents and individuals as they determine their own participation with the vaccine. We will also continue the focus on good hygiene as a preventative measure and recommend that students and staff stay home if they are sick. We will continue to monitor recommendations and data to ensure safety for all.

I prayerfully begin my work in guiding the Diocese to provide a Catholic education that teaches students to use the lenses of truth, beauty, and goodness to analyze their academic learning and the world around them. We want to prepare our students to live as children of God and to share their gifts with the world. Bishop Golka encouraged me to ask the Holy Spirit to be present in my work each day; I ask you to join me in this prayer:

“Holy Spirit, grant me the gifts of wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord so that I may rightly direct all my actions, referring them to God as my last end; so that, having loved Him and served Him in this life, I may have the happiness of possessing Him eternally in the next.”

Yours in Christ,

Sheila Whalen
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