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TRENTON

*Department of Catholic Education*

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April 30, 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians,

This correspondence conveys sincere thanks for working with Catholic school educators to enhance your child's learning experiences.

As we work to provide continuous learning for students in this period of unexpected change, I take this opportunity to provide updates.

To support student learning, conversation takes place on many levels. Beyond the student and teacher and teacher and parent connection, principals communicate with teachers on a regular basis. Principals and members of the Department of Catholic Schools also engage in periodic check-ins to share best practices and receive updates. Discussion was initiated among principals regarding the grading system during this time of remote learning. With many points of view and consideration of options, a number of sound and viable possibilities were proposed.

With half of the trimester completed, the decision was made to utilize the present reporting process on the report card rather than change at this point in time. A natural outcome of the discussion was the prompting of much thought and deep consideration of the total learning process and the beauty of learning for its own sake. This conversation will continue!

After careful consideration the decision was made as follows:

- to continue with the present reporting system on the report card
- to report each trimester as a distinct period of learning reflecting the first two trimesters in the school setting with direct teacher and student engagement and the third trimester as one of remote learning
- to include a statement on the report card indicating that the third trimester grades reflect modifications in instruction and delivery because of COVID-19

This pandemic has provided time to reflect upon many current educational practices that have served students in the past while attempting to envision what may be required and available as global changes continue to be realized. These conversations are necessary and will be explored as goals for learning are established at the school and diocesan level.

For the immediate school year, teachers will utilize the grading system that is part of their repertoire. Among the areas that contribute to the trimester grade are class assignments,



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assessments (quizzes and tests), participation, portfolio assignments, project-based learning and personalized learning experiences.

With input from principals, teachers continue to have the discretion to weigh particular assignments, to decide if assignments require reteaching, and to work with students as competencies are developed. Sensitive to pacing and learning, teachers have the option to utilize a day for reteaching as may be needed or for one-to-one connection with students for direct support. The day may be one for personalized learning or to delve into a book that has been assigned or to engage in an assigned project. It is the hope that during this time of remote learning that with a variety of approaches to education, learning will come alive for students.

Teachers continue to utilize a number of materials to enrich student learning. Beyond the textbook, many resources have been shared to provide opportunities to re-discover the joy of learning.

Renaissance Learning has provided two engaging components to students in our schools – Freckle which hones math competencies and MyOn which provides enhancement in reading through exposure to current and timely topics. Also available are over 7,000 online books for students to experience adventures through the written word. The materials are free of charge and can also be utilized during the summer months.

Students come to school with an open mind to learn and to enjoy the learning process. Part of that learning involves errors which help students to discern that which does not work or that which can be improved upon. A piano teacher does not expect a student to play proficiently within a defined and limited period of time. There are drills to be practiced and notes to be learned and sounds to be enjoyed. There are mistakes to be made for in the practice is the learning. So, too, in schooling.

The importance is the constancy and commitment to the process - the ability to think to the point where thinking is a habit, to imagine, to create, to discern, to discover, to innovate. Today's students are called upon to be critical thinkers and they will be responsible to solve problems that currently elude compromise or action. Thank you for being an integral part of the process during this time. Your guidance and investment in your child's learning are valued.

Sincerely,

JoAnn Tier  
Superintendent of Catholic Schools