



August 17, 2020

Dear Staff,

I write you today to extend my heartfelt appreciation for answering the call to serve our Catholic school children and love them as your own.

You are the individuals who have to take temperatures at the door, make sure masks are worn properly, and stand guard for your school family against an invisible invader we call COVID-19. I thank you for having that loving and compassionate character. You have to arrive early and stay late to adjust and disinfect your surroundings sacrificing time with your families. I thank you for that generous spirit. You have to be so flexible to turn your classroom into an inspiring virtual learning environment at a moment's notice with a smile on your face in these unwanted times. I thank you for that graceful adaptability.

You truly treat each and every student with love and none of the plans we have made, changed, and adjusted over the past months would be possible without you. Those policies, plans, and practices have been prepared to provide protection for everyone in our buildings and are subject to change as needed. Our ability to offer in person instruction and programs depends on our vigilance and the individual actions of our students, staff, and school community. Thank you for going above and beyond.

As Bishop Mark Brennan said to the faithful, “we look with cautious optimism toward the opening of the fall semester in our Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston.” I thank you for your positive attitude and ability to work together as a school family. That is the key to keeping our doors open.

Like you I am eager to greet the children on Sept. 8<sup>th</sup> in person. Your presence in our buildings is a great present for our students and families. You are the superheroes.

Words cannot express how grateful I am that you recognize how crucial it is that we accept personal responsibility and are on one page as it pertains to our main goal – to do everything in our power to keep all staff and students safe at school.

From new desk arrangements and hallway flow patterns, to lunch protocols and strict extra-curricular guidelines, thank you for doing everything we need to do to be compliant.

As you are well aware each of our schools has filed a “reopening plan” approved by the respective county health officials after consultation with the Center of Disease Control (CDC), and the Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR) offices. Governor Jim Justice announced this week that any closure of schools will be done on a local not state level.

Know we are here to support you. We recognize that while some measures may not be popular, they must be followed to minimize the spread of this virus. Thank you for being a caring example of respect for life by wearing a mask, keeping socially distanced, and washing/sanitizing hands – lives depend on it.

Thank you for completely understanding what the “new normal” is in our schools and reinforcing that to our families. I appreciate you accepting the role of a positive ambassador.

For those of you who last spring did not settle for a pass-fail curriculum, provided invigorating lessons and material, and proved to be genuinely interested in the academic, social, and emotional well-being of your students; you are to be commended. Your efforts did not go unnoticed and made Catholic schools in our state noticeably outshine the others.

So now, just as we are about to give our students a new set of responsibility, challenges, and accountability, thank you for accepting the same. Our students will follow your lead.

God bless you for supporting the process, respecting the difficult decisions that needed to be made, and showing your unwavering commitment to our Catholic schools. Make it a great year!

Peace-

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Ann Deschaine".

Mary Ann Deschaine, Ed.S.  
Superintendent