Leading with Hope:

A Reflective Guide for Catholic Schools in a New Reality

Developed by

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Lord, may you bless the world, give health to our bodies and comfort our hearts. You ask us not to be afraid. Yet our faith is weak and we are fearful. But you, Lord, will not leave us at the mercy of the storm. Tell us again: "Do not be afraid" (Mt 28:5). And we, together with Peter, "cast all our anxieties onto you, for you care about us" (1 Pet 5:7).

-Pope Francis
Strong in the Face of Tribulation:
A Sure Support in Time of Trial

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Introduction

"Everything has suddenly changed. What we previously took for granted seems to be uncertain: the way we relate with others at work, how we manage our emotions, study, recreation, prayer, even the possibility of attending Mass..."

-Pope Francis
Strong in the Face of Tribulation: A Sure Support in Time of Trial

We are in an unprecedented time. The reality of COVID 19 has presented a number of significant tribulations. At the very minimum, trying to adapt to teaching in new ways while grieving the loss of our sense of normality is emotionally draining. The thoughts of preparation for a fall opening of school in an uncertain future only magnifies the anxiety and fear. However, Pope Francis has offered that "present difficulties have stimulated the creativity and inventiveness" and this has invited us to new methods of engagement and ministry.

As Catholic school leaders, we are being invited to a period of "creativity and inventiveness." This moment in time is reminiscent of the conversion story of St. Ignatius of Loyola. After being seriously injured by a cannonball that caused a lengthy and painful rehabilitation period, St. Ignatius found his calling to ministry. This long journey of discovery eventually led to the founding of the Society of Jesus (the "Jesuits").

Moments like this can become our "cannonball moment," causing us to divert from *our* plans and abandon ourselves to a larger plan. This may be the time to make ourselves open, to find "creative and innovative" ways to discover new paths. Perhaps this is not only a time to *survive*, but to thrive.

In this spirit, we offer this reflective guide. We have no answers and we do not offer this resource as the definitive guide. There are no experts in global responses to schooling in a "shelter at home" world. We are experiencing this phenomenon at the same time as everyone else. Rather, this guide is meant to provoke thoughts and promote discussion about a systems' level of readiness to re-enter school this coming fall. We recognize that teachers and principals are on the front line responding to daily issues related to completing this school year. They do not have the luxury of time and space to create system responses for the uncertain world that we will encounter when school starts again in the fall.

This guide is part of a three-pronged approach to support schools in making the necessary plans for a return to school (See Figure 1).

1. DISCUSS AND PLAN

The first prong of this strategy is to assess the current status of readiness, identify priority areas of work, and develop a plan. It is important to remember that you will not be able to account for every scenario. Rather, using this guide as a template, school-based leadership teams can craft a path forward and, hopefully, predict any kinds of deviation in a planful manner. The first step in this process is to review the checklist and assess areas of strength and areas requiring attention in the five domains (See figure 2). These domains consist of the following:

Logistics and Planning

This domain encompasses the basic operational aspects of the school. Included in this domain are safety procedures, arrival/dismissal, procedures for online learning, and other aspects of schooling.

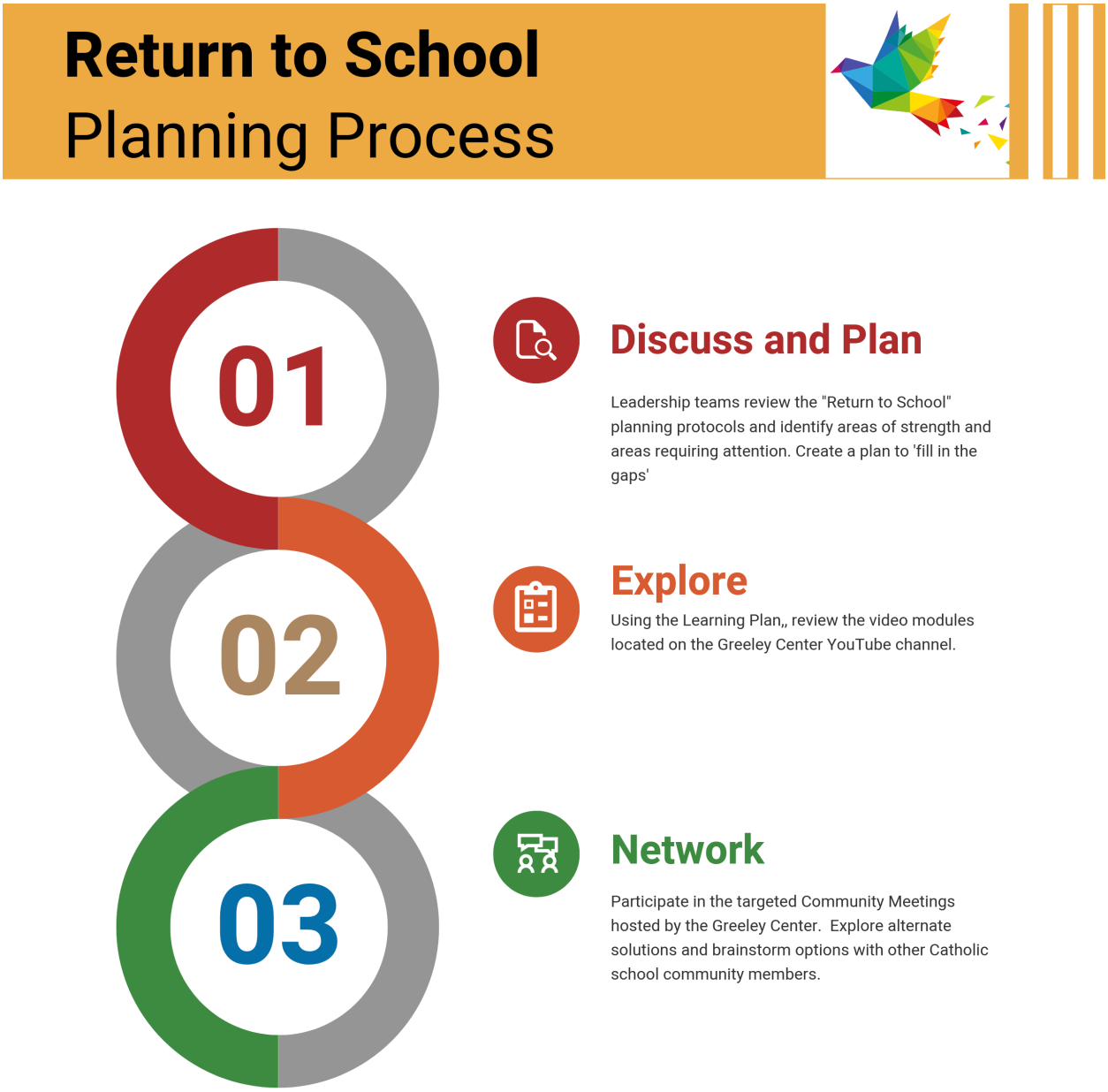
Creating and Maintaining Community

This domain addresses the social/emotional aspect of school. Significant concerns include how schools develop systems of *welcoming* and *belonging* for students and their families. Given the potentiality for new school structures, the process of establishment and maintenance of community norms and rituals requires attention.

Curriculum and Instruction

Teaching and learning are prominent functions of schools. This domain entails the teaching and learning aspects of the re-entry response. Responses must include the learning context, whether school will be face-face, remote or a combination of both.

Figure 1: Planning Process



Promoting Catholic Identity in Remote Spaces

Catholic schools are, by definition, academically excellent and strong in Catholic identity. This must also be true for Catholic schools in virtual spaces. Catholic schools must continue to be authentically Catholic and serve as an avenue for faith formation.

Technology

This domain addresses not only infrastructure issues but also the use of technology as a tool for instruction. Inherent in this domain are access and equity issues. A comprehensive approach includes both high-tech and no-tech responses.

2. EXPLORE

After completing the self-assessment and reflective protocols, school leaders and their teams will find areas that will require strengthening. The second prong in this approach is to explore professional learning resources to build capacity in the targeted areas. Given the immediacy of the current situation, there is very little time to complete this task. To this end, the Greeley Center is developing a cache of short, instructive video modules that will be available for on-demand consumption. These video modules can help to provide targeted professional learning in a convenient manner.

3. NETWORK

The third prong in this strategy is to network with other Catholic school leadership teams. Hosted by the Greeley Center team, school leaders and their teams are offered the opportunity to meet with other Catholic educators in small groups in Community Meetings held in a virtual space. The meetings will be facilitated by members of the Greeley Center team and will allow participants to brainstorm options and trouble-shoot barriers. Using structured problem solving protocols and informal interaction, Catholic school-based leaders and teams can use this collegial forum to troubleshoot and validate their action plans.

CAVEAT

It is important to note that this guide does not supplant or replace the advice and directives from diocesan, governmental, and medical authorities. It is only meant to serve as a supplement and to help to frame planning through an educational lens. Schools are reminded to stay update and to comply with any local regulations that apply to the local school setting.

Figure 2: Planning Domains for School Re-entry

5 Planning Domains for School Re-entry

The five domains are the school programming factors that should be addressed when planning for a return to school. It is important to note that this guide does not supplant or replace the advice and directives from governmental and medical agencies. It is only meant to serve as a supplement and to help to frame planning through an educational lens.

1 Logistics and Planning.
This domain encompasses the basic operational aspects of the school. Included in this domain are safety procedures, arrival/dismissal, procedures for online learning and other aspects of schooling.

5 Technology Support
This domain addresses not only infrastructure issues but also the use of technology as a tool for instruction. Inherent in this domain are access and equity issues. A comprehensive approach includes both high-tech and no-tech responses.

2 Creating and Maintaining Community
This domain addresses the social/emotional aspect of school. Significant concerns include how schools develop systems of welcoming and belonging for students and their families. Given the potentiality for new school structures, the process of establishment and maintenance of community norms and rituals requires attention.

3 Curriculum and Instruction
Teaching and learning are prominent functions of schools. This domain entails the teaching and learning aspects of the re-entry response. Responses must include the learning context, whether school will be face-face, virtual, or a combination of both.

4 Promoting Catholic Identity in Remote Spaces
Catholic schools are, by definition, academically excellent and strong in Catholic identity. This must also be true for Catholic schools in virtual spaces. Catholic schools must continue to be authentically Catholic and serve as an avenue for faith formation.

Return to School Readiness Checklist

Dear brave women, you who walked the path of Mercy before us, you've known epidemics in other times and places. Be guides for us now as we navigate new and frightening paths—a worldwide pandemic, universal social turmoil and economic distress, and so much fear, pain and anxiety for ordinary folks. We know that there are blessings in all of this somewhere; help us to find and share them. Walk with us. Amen."

-Sister Patricia McCann
A Personal Communion of Saints in the Time of Coronavirus

This is a reflection on the early Sisters of Mercy who arrived in America and immediately ministered to those in need at the time of the Typhoid Epidemic in 1848

Return to School Readiness Checklist

The following checklists were created to serve as a framework to promote conversations to assess various aspects of readiness for returning to school. Upon completing the checklists, schools can "take a deeper dive" into the various domains. After reviewing the various domains, schools can start to identify areas that are better developed and domains that need further investigation. Additional video modules will be available to provide professional development support.

Logistics and Planning *Our school has given consideration to…*	Started Reflecting on These Ideas	Exploring Options has Started	Planning is Underway
Creating well defined entrance protocols for students, teachers, and visitors			
Developing routines for daily health checks			
Developing protocols for social distancing in the classroom			
Developing a plan for social distancing outside of the classroom in highly populated areas like hallway/locker areas, restrooms, locker rooms, lunchroom/cafeteria, the library, etc. This includes a plan for Mass and extra-curricular activities.			
Developing scheduling options to facilitate reduced capacity at school			
Creating a plan to handle confidentiality issues			
Procuring the necessary supplies for hygiene like hand sanitizer, wipes with bleach, etc.			
Creating a plan for deep-cleaning of facilities and high touch areas daily, between alternate schedules, in the case of evidence of positive cases, etc.			
Developing any necessary protocols for wearing face masks including creating plans for students with sensory issues			
Reviewing and updated the Emergency Contact Plan			
Periodically surveying stakeholders to evaluate programming and support and make adjustments.			

Started Reflecting on These Ideas: These are new ideas for us to consider. We are thinking about these concepts for the first time.

Exploring Options has Started: We are familiar with these ideas and doing initial planning to see what is applicable in our school setting.

Planning is Underway: We have done considerable research into these concepts and have developed actionable plans for implementation in our schools.

Domain: Creating and Maintaining Community *Our school has given consideration to…*	Started Reflecting on These Ideas	Exploring Options has Started	Planning is Underway
Creating community and connecting with students in new school configurations			
Facilitating community and connection with faculty and staff			
Onboarding students to orient to the new realities of the classroom and school			
Developing a differentiated on-boarding plan for students that are new to the school (transfer students, freshmen, etc.)			
Developing authentic ways for parents to connect with the school community in a virtual world			
Maintaining daily rituals (i.e. daily announcements, morning prayer, etc.)			
Structuring social opportunities for students and families			
Creating ways to mitigate stress responses in students, teachers, and families			
Enhancing approaches to support social emotional learning			
Adjusting recruiting and marketing practices to attract new families and maintain contact with those newly enrolled.			

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Domain: Curriculum and Instruction Our school has given consideration to...	Started Reflecting on These Ideas	Exploring Options has Started	Planning is Underway
Creating year-long plans to facilitate more meaningful, interdisciplinary units that can be delivered face to face or remotely.			
Ensuring all instructional experiences include modeling, guided instruction, collaborative work, and independent work rather than over-reliance on independent work during remote learning. This requires strategic use of synchronous and asynchronous lessons.			
Varying the way content is delivered to students (reading, lecture/mini lesson, videos, visual tools, modeling) and the way students can demonstrate their understanding (writing, speaking, visual products, modeling/building).			
Engaging students through setting a purpose for the work and providing choice in the process and product of the work.			
Ensuring all learning is respectful. Students are not given “fluff” or busy work to fill time or provide an item to grade. Videos and apps are age-appropriate.			
Utilizing frequent and varied formative assessment methods in both face-to-face and remote learning.			
Meeting in small groups or one-on-one as needed for connection, instruction, and assessment.			
Coordinating assignments, deadlines, projects and assessments among teachers to ensure a manageable workload.			
Utilizing authentic assessments rather than an over-reliance on tests.			
Evaluating grading practices to ensure grades reflect progress on standards rather than dispositions such as responsibility or work ethic.			

Reviewing and implementing best practices in synchronous and asynchronous instruction to meet student needs and engagement.			
Making adjustments to school-based services plans for students with disabilities to account for accommodations and modifications needed in a remote learning environment.			
Ensuring meaningful support is provided for English Learners and their families including that teachers, students, and parents are adept at utilizing translation tools.			
Creating an "early warning system" to identify and intervene with students who may be exhibiting academic and/or behavioral concerns.			
Develop a plan for benchmark screening and intervention delivery during face-to-face and remote learning.			
Avoiding new initiatives and protecting professional learning time for teachers to develop flexible learning plans for next year.			
Adjusting curricular and supply orders to reflect the most useful tools for both face to face and distance learning.			

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Exploring Options has Started: We are familiar with these ideas and doing initial planning to see what is applicable in our school setting.

Planning is Underway: We have done considerable research into these concepts and have developed actionable plans for implementation in our schools.

Domain: Maintaining our Catholic Identity in Virtual Spaces Our school has given consideration to…	Started Reflecting on These Ideas	Exploring Options has Started	Planning is Underway
Providing opportunities for school-wide Eucharistic celebrations and other prayer services, involving students in the planning.			
Invite parents and families to join in virtual prayer and faith life activities.			
Creating explicit service activities that can be completed in a virtual community.			
Continue to integrate Catholic worldview and gospel values with content lessons.			
Created a plan for both Pastor and Principal to be present and visible.			

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Planning is Underway: We have done considerable research into these concepts and have developed actionable plans for implementation in our schools.

Domain: Technology Our school has given consideration to...	Started Reflecting on These Ideas	Exploring Options has Started	Planning is Underway
Creating an at-home learning schedule that incorporates best practice in both synchronous and asynchronous learning.			
Coordinating consistent apps and platforms across grade levels.			
Developing learning plans that offer rigorous learning for those without predictable access to online learning.			
Identifying ways for school-owned devices to download new technologies (once they have left school).			
Ensuring school safety policies exist including training of digital citizenship for all device users, use of student passwords, protection provided by a school firewall, etc.			
Surveying school population to determine what equity and access to technology exists.			
Providing a pick-up line with social distancing for families to pick up devices.			

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Exploring Options has Started: We are familiar with these ideas and doing initial planning to see what is applicable in our school setting.

Planning is Underway: We have done considerable research into these concepts and have developed actionable plans for implementation in our schools.

Return to School Planning Domains

"Start with the impossible.
Proceed calmly towards the improbable.
No worry, there are at least five exits."

-David Berrigan, SJ

Returning to School

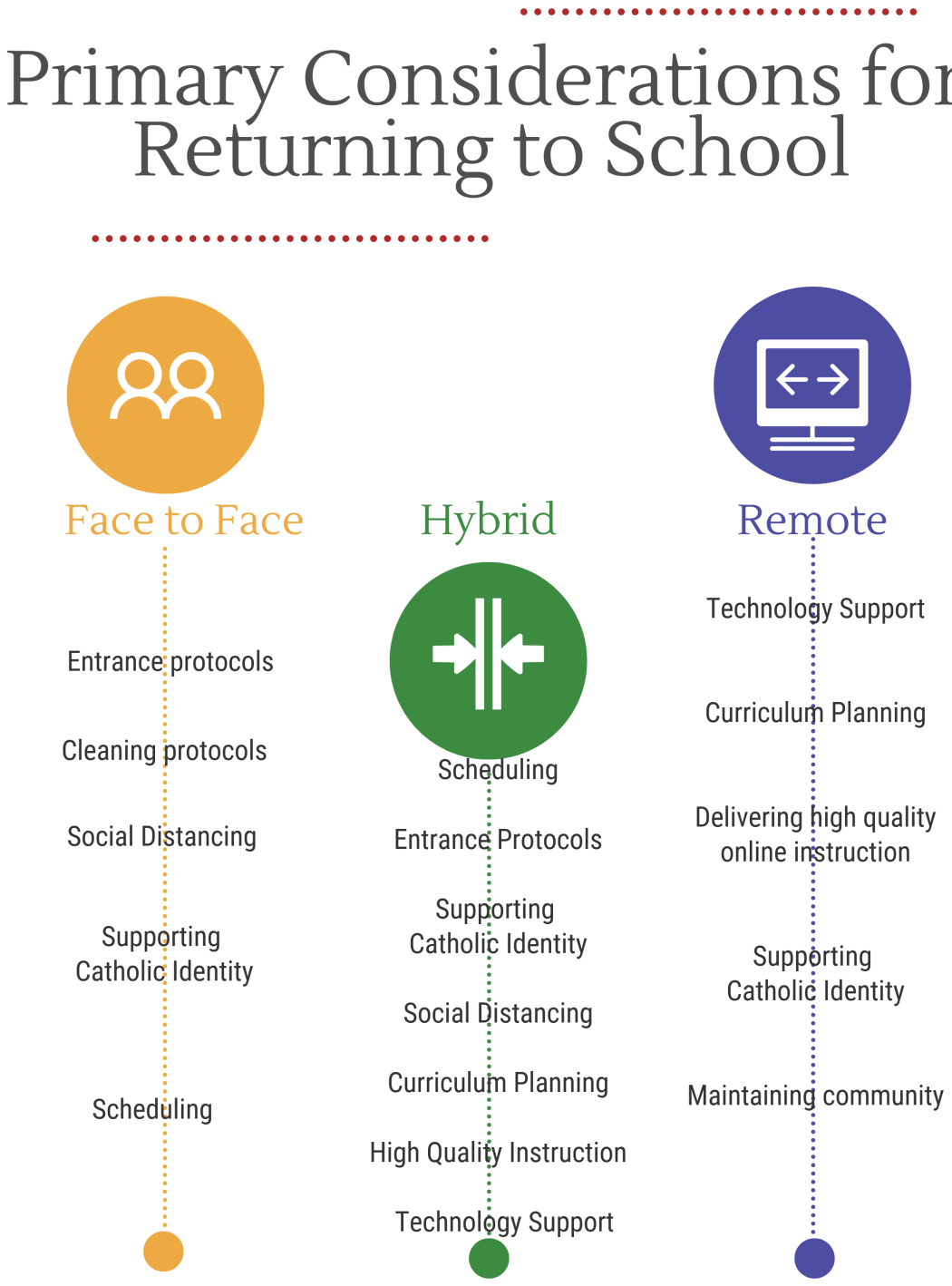
There are basic places (but multiple variations on the theme) of where school will occur (See Figure 3):

> *Traditional School Setting*: It is conceivable that, in some locations, students will return to a "brick and mortar" school (with accommodations). If this is the case, there are several primary logistics and planning considerations that should be addressed: entrance protocols, social distancing, scheduling.
>
> *Non-Traditional School Setting*: In some locations, governmental and diocesan authorities may deem a return to school as inadvisable. In those cases, school will have to occur in some sort of virtual configuration. If this is the case, the logistics and planning considerations that need to be made include technology support, developing and delivering high quality online instruction, supporting Catholic Identity, and maintaining community.
>
> *Hybrid School Setting*: Given the particular local context, some schools may choose to do a combination of both the traditional and non-traditional school settings. Schools will need to plan for a variety of configurations of this approach. Schools may have to plan for housing different rates of occupancy. For example, some locations may order scheduling at 50% capacity while other authorities may order lower levels of occupancy. To this end, schools will need to consider quality programming for the other portions of the day. In the hybrid school setting, the logistics and planning considerations that need to be made include scheduling, entrance protocols, social distancing, curriculum planning, high quality instruction, and technology support.

Regardless of the scenario, attending to the social-emotional health of students and faculty will be paramount. Schools should not underestimate the chronic nature of this current pandemic. The potential that the impact of the pandemic on school communities will be highly is likely. This includes the potential of post-traumatic responses. Schools may need to double their efforts in supporting faculty, staff, and families.

Additionally, schools need to recognize that there may be lasting impact on those students and faculty members that are medically fragile or immunocompromised. Schools should remain flexible in their approaches and implement additional strategies to allow access for students that may not be able to attend in person. In this case, lessons may need to be recorded or live streamed for those who can't be present.

Figure 3: Primary Considerations for Returning to School



Logistics and Planning

The first domain in this framework is ***logistics and planning***. This domain responds to the operational aspects of a return to school in the fall. Planning priorities will be based on the configuration of the return to school.

Factors that need to be considered:

Entrance Protocols

These routines and procedures will be subject to the guidelines set by local governmental agencies. Nothing can be taken for granted. Schools will need to create systems and procedures to handle the daily routines of the school and control access to the building.

- Entering school - What would the standard routines (faculty entering school, students entering school, processing visitors in the office, etc.) look like? Routines would need to be created to minimize the exposure to any contagions. This might include controlling entrance through one set of specified doors and exit through another. Schools will need to give consideration to decontamination of those entering the school (sanitizing shoes, exchange of masks, temperature checks, hand-washing, etc.).
- Routines will need to be created for where students entering the school should report. Instead of mass holding areas, students will need to report to various areas that would minimize the number of students in any one area.
- Hand sanitizing stations should be readily available so that both students and adults can wash hands throughout the day.
- Schools have developed a plan for controlled access to the building after hours (i.e., religious education classrooms that share the same space, other areas of the school that are used by the parish, etc.).

Health Checks

Schools will need to establish a standard routine of checking the health status of all those that enter the school.

- Establish a process to assess the daily health status of arriving students (including possible temperature checks and health questionnaires).
- Re-evaluate your "calling in sick" procedure. When families call in students for health concerns, establish a protocol for a report on student symptoms, length of illness, etc.
- Strengthen a "return to school" protocol, including benchmarks that would allow a student to return.
- Create a procedure for a student and/or staff who become ill during the day. This should include a place of isolation until the affected individual can leave the school.

Teaching and Maintaining Social Distancing

Upon the return to school, it will be important to determine how social distancing will be taught and supported during the school day.

- Schools should consider teaching protocols to develop social distancing. This will especially be critical for younger students. Protocols should be explicit and directly taught to students (much like Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports).
- Create visual supports (six foot distance lines, directional arrows on floors to monitor and direct hallway traffic). Additionally, developing visual reminders for safe behaviors like wearing masks can help increase compliance.
- Schools should develop protocols for wearing face masks as well as the implications for behavioral expectations like a refusal to wear face masks.
- Schools will need to consider amending their school-wide behavioral expectations. Additionally, schools will need to identify those students with sensory issues related to wearing masks and work to develop remediation strategies.
- Schools will need to adopt a "re-teaching mentality" for those students who have difficulty in exhibiting appropriate social distancing. Young students and those students who typically have difficulty in maintaining social proximity will require additional re-teaching and other prompts to support this behavior.
- School furniture should be organized so that it reflects a 6-foot distance between students.
- The possible use of study carrels or other dividers created with material that is easily sanitized could be considered to assist with social distancing.

Planning for Social Distancing in School

Schools need to consider what space utilization would look like in a social distancing world. If reduced class sizes were ordered by health agencies, schools would need to develop schedules that would accommodate this.

- Schools will need to use scheduling to minimize contact. Lunchroom, locker areas/hallways, restrooms, locker rooms and library are all areas that can be

densely populated. Controlled transitions releasing small groups of students at a time can help to minimize the density of the population.
- Schools may need to consider using alternate attendance schedules to help minimize contact. This could mean schools use an "A" and "B" schedule, where students alternate between attending face-to-face instruction on even days and virtual instruction on odd days. Students on a "B" schedule would attend school opposite to the "A" schedule.
- Consider the implications of scheduling decisions on families. Keeping children in a family on the same schedule should be a priority to lessen the burden on families.
- To accommodate a 1:10 teacher to student learning ratio, schools may need to examine the use of flex space into usually under-utilized areas of the school. This will also require a redeployment of staff to support appropriate supervision of students.
- Consider alternative layout for furniture in classrooms and shared spaces.
- Identify ways to limit sharing of materials and toys and ensure thorough sanitization between uses.

Planning for Social Distancing Outside of School

- School Masses will require their own protocol that will maintain the appropriate social distancing. Attendance of parents and general community at the school liturgies may have to be suspended depending on local regulations
- Planning for extra-curricular activities will depend on the recommendations of the local sports organizations, dioceses, the State Board of Health, etc. Any social distancing protocols for use in school should be adjusted for outside of school, on sports fields, in dance studios, in locker rooms, etc. Extra-curricular events may not allow for audiences other than officials and school supervision.

Confidentiality

During the initial stages of the pandemic, some faculty at some schools displayed pictures of students on various social media platforms, in an effort to acknowledge the "all for one" attitude and recognize some heroic efforts to support students. However, it is important to remember, even if the intentions are laudable, that student confidentiality shouldn't be jeopardized. To this end, confidentiality will be even more important in whatever school configuration is used this fall.

- Schools should review and update as necessary confidentiality and media release policies and procedures to reflect the new realities.
- Faculty and staff should be reminded of confidentiality policies, especially as it relates to student and faculty health status to ensure that this is not inadvertently released.

Finances

Whatever the model of return to school that will be practiced this fall, financial issues will present as challenges. Explicit responses to a variety of scenarios will be needed.

- Schools will need to review tuition collection procedures so that they reflect the current realities of the local schools. Payment due dates may need to be reviewed to be sensitive to family situations.
- Tuition assistance procedures will need to be adjusted to address the reality that some families that have never had to access this service may now be asking for this kind of support. Additional support may need to be provided to help families access and navigate the process. Along with this, staff reminders for adopting a ministerial approach can be helpful.
- Creative approaches to traditional fundraising activities (like galas, trivia nights, etc.) will need to be utilized if in-person approaches are limited because of local governmental regulations.

Maintenance

Working closely with the facilities staff, schools will need to develop additional cleaning protocols in order to ensure safe environments. Among the considerations are the following:

- Ensuring that maintenance staff have the appropriate training to execute the deep cleaning protocols necessary to maintain the school
- Procuring the necessary supplies (sanitizer, temperature check machines, replacement face masks , etc.)
- Creating cleaning protocols for high touch areas throughout the day.

Focus on Continual Improvement

As new practices are implemented and adjusted, it is essential that schools and diocesan systems establish a process for continual evaluation. This should include periodically surveying stakeholders (students, parents, faculty, principals) about their experiences of success and challenge and adjusting programming, resources and support as necessary.

Creating and Maintaining Community

The second domain in this framework is devoted to creating and maintaining community. A critical and often distinguishing characteristic of Catholic schools is the strength of the school community. Without explicit actions, the sense of community can be greatly challenged in times of stress and crisis. As schools move to a return to operations, Catholic school leaders should make intentional decisions to support and develop the community, no matter what schooling format is chosen for the school year. The support expressed by the school should extend to be both spiritual and material. As a faith community, there should be outward expressions of spiritual support through both prayer and ritual. Depending on the economic state of the community, material support may range from tuition support and assistance with school supplies all the way to helping to locate supports for those that experience food insecurity.

It is critical to remember that the pandemic didn't just end. There will be lasting impact and it will be pervasive. The pandemic is not just "over." It would be a mistake to think that everyone has adjusted to the "new normal." The situation is dynamic and fluid and school will need to continually assess the impact that the pandemic has on the school's community.

Factors that need to be addressed:

Creating Community

The possibility exists that the new school year may begin face-to-face but quickly shift to remote learning, or that the school year may begin with remote learning. With this in mind, special care must be given to prioritizing establishing community within a classroom.

- Teachers can consider scheduling a series of one-on-one or small group sessions to get to know students.
- Establish a classroom meeting routine which includes greeting, sharing, and ice breaker activities (Responsive Classroom). This routine can continue throughout remote learning.

- Utilize frequent feedback surveys with students and caregivers to assess sense of belonging and comfort in the class.
- Take advantage of opportunities to socialize with students (during arrival, lunch periods). Teachers can schedule optional snack breaks and lunch meet ups during remote instruction as well.

Maintaining Routines That Support Community

- Schools will need to develop procedures for daily announcements and prayer, following the various possible configurations of schools. For example, in remote settings, schools should consider what prayer and daily announcements looks like in comparison to schools that have returned on a split schedule.
- Procedures for other standard school functions such as "Back to School" nights and parent conferences will need to be created depending on the various school configurations.
- Maintain the activities that are unique to the respective school community and create new opportunities to develop and enhance the feelings of community. Sometimes in the rush of creating the *learning* aspect of school, the *community* aspect can be overlooked. Community is a critical aspect of the Catholic school.
- Schools cannot overlook the *fun*. One of the comments heard often in the first remote learning attempts was that "it was school without the fun parts." Schools should give strong consideration to how to incorporate fun activities such as "spirit week", virtual field day, and student challenges.
- Schools should consider creating an inventory of the unique rituals of the school and look for ways to translate them to new formats to help maintain community.
- Develop an on-boarding plan for all students to orient them to any new procedures in school.
- Create new ways to orient students and families that are new to the school, including assigning a buddy family.

Facilitating Ongoing Connections

With new configurations of schooling that will occur, there is a loss of the informal, yet powerful, connections that the school community has with each other.

- Strengthen current avenues and create new approaches for communication (i.e. virtual "Coffee with the Principal, " Roundtables, Town Hall Meetings)
- Develop new ways for parents to connect with one another for socialization and support
- Identify channels of communication with faculty so that parents know how to reach out to them.

- Create opportunities for informal connections among faculty and staff. In formal programming meetings, faculty will connect with each other. However, staff and faculty will yearn to be with each other as a whole school community. These channels will need to be encouraged so that the faculty and staff do not experience isolation from the community that is often life-giving.

Recruitment and Marketing

- Reach out to newly enrolled families to check-in with the family and provide an update on how the school has responded with remote learning. Pair newly enrolled families with current families as a buddy system for continual communication through the summer.
- Adjust marketing materials to the current situation. Communicate how your school has facilitated a personal connection with families to provide support during this time. Highlight your school's key messages and provide examples of how you deliver faith formation and meaningful academic experiences both face-to-face and through remote learning.
- Host virtual open houses and tours if stay-at-home orders persist over the summer and continue to provide the option for those that may prefer it even if they are lifted.
- Encourage parent ambassadors to update online reviews of the school to include their experience of remote learning this spring.

Mitigating Stress Responses

The community (students, families, teachers) will undoubtedly have stress reactions from the last year coupled with potential anxiety about new variables this fall. Most likely for many families, there will be complicating factors related to economic obstacles and potential health concerns. There is comfort in the stability that school has to offer and that will be most likely disrupted. Moving into the fall, schools will need to give strong consideration to creating methods to help dissipate these feelings of stress and anxiety before they become debilitating.

- Ensuring the explicit instruction and integration of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) as a preventative measure to aid in student coping and emotional regulation.
- Developing an "early warning system" to identify students who are struggling (in academic and/or behavioral domains)
- Marshaling existing resources and finding new ones to support families
- Creating an anonymous process for families to access financial and food support and mental health services
- Using scheduling to mitigate stress for students, parents, and faculty by staggering larger assignments, due dates and long-term projects
- Adopting alternative schedules such as four days of instruction and holding one work day for teachers/students to catch up

Curriculum and Instruction

•Creating supports for teachers who have students who are struggling

- Creating supports for faculty and staff who are struggling personally with stress

The third domain in the framework is curriculum and instruction. We all know now that teaching in person and teaching virtually can be very different. Relationships and the well-being of students are most important. Virtual teaching requires that we prioritize the most important learning. Virtual learning must be:

- Based on positive relationships
- Focused
- Clear
- Varied
- Reasonable
- Nimble

As indicated earlier, the likelihood of the pandemic spilling over to the new school year is great. As such, students and families (and lets not forget about faculty and staff) will be undergoing chronic stress. The brain experiencing stress has great difficulty acquiring new information.

With the great disruption in learning that occurred as a result of the transitions to new instructional models, there will be great temptation to *jam* the learning from last year into this year's learning sequence. It will be critical for schools to determine what is the most important learning and to focus on that. Of course, it will be critical to ensure that assessment systems are designed to determine progress towards that identified important learning.

Additionally, curriculum must be designed in such a way that it is nimble and can be shifted between in-person and online instruction. When the stay at home orders began in the Spring of 2020, teachers were forced to translate their instructional plans and materials into online delivery even though the materials and plans were not developed with this in mind. While heroic with their creativity, the translation required hours and hours of time and research and some of the learning simply could not transfer to the online environment. An opportunity exists to design flexible instructional plans leveraging the tools that work best in both in-person and remote environments.

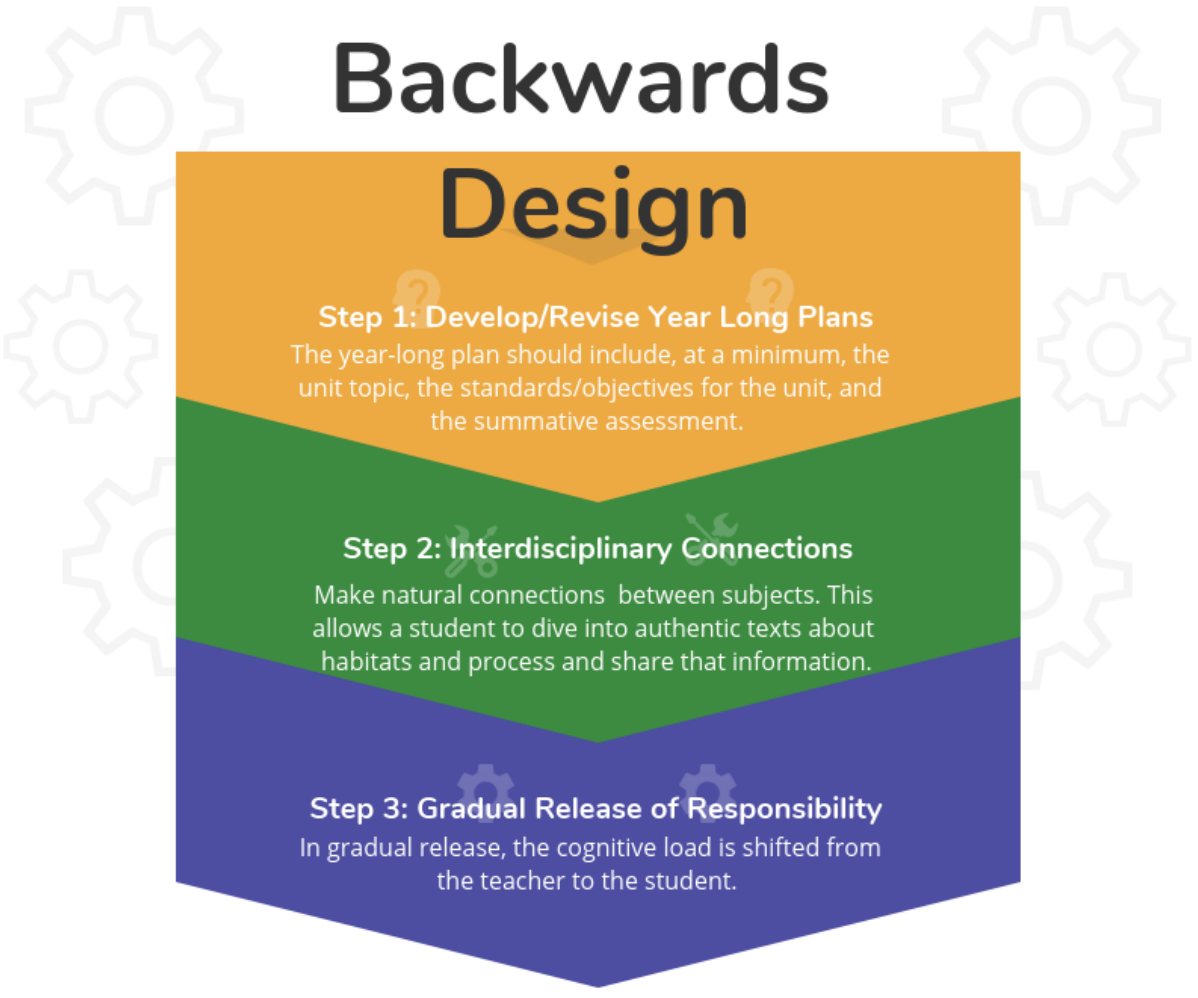
Factors that need to be addressed:

Instructional Design

Backward Design (See Figure 4)

Best practice for curriculum development is not dependent upon whether instruction will be in-person or remote. All curriculum should be designed with the end in mind. In fact, with remote learning it becomes all the more evident when a teacher plans without the end in mind - objectives get lost in the midst of a jumble of videos and activities, assessments are not aligned to important outcomes, and each day feels like a long to-do list rather than progress toward important learning. As teachers approach the next school year, they need protected time and a process to plan units that can transition between in-person and virtual. The curriculum must be appropriately paced, focus on priority standards, provide opportunities for differentiation and intervention, and leverage materials and techniques that are effective in either environment.

Figure 4: Backwards Design



Step 1: Develop/Revise Year Long Plans

Each teacher should develop a year-long plan for each subject/course that they teach.

- The year-long plan should include, at a minimum, the unit topic, the standards/ objectives for the unit, and the summative assessment.
- Units are considered to be 4 to 6 weeks of learning. Planning by unit rather than by week or by day ensures that the learning is building toward important outcomes.
- Teaching online requires teachers to lay out a plan, usually with several days or even weeks' worth of content and learning activities visible to students and to parents. This content should be strategically designed and selected so as to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills.
- A build-as-you-go approach to curriculum is not advisable as it leads to confusion for students and parents and the value of the work is called into question.

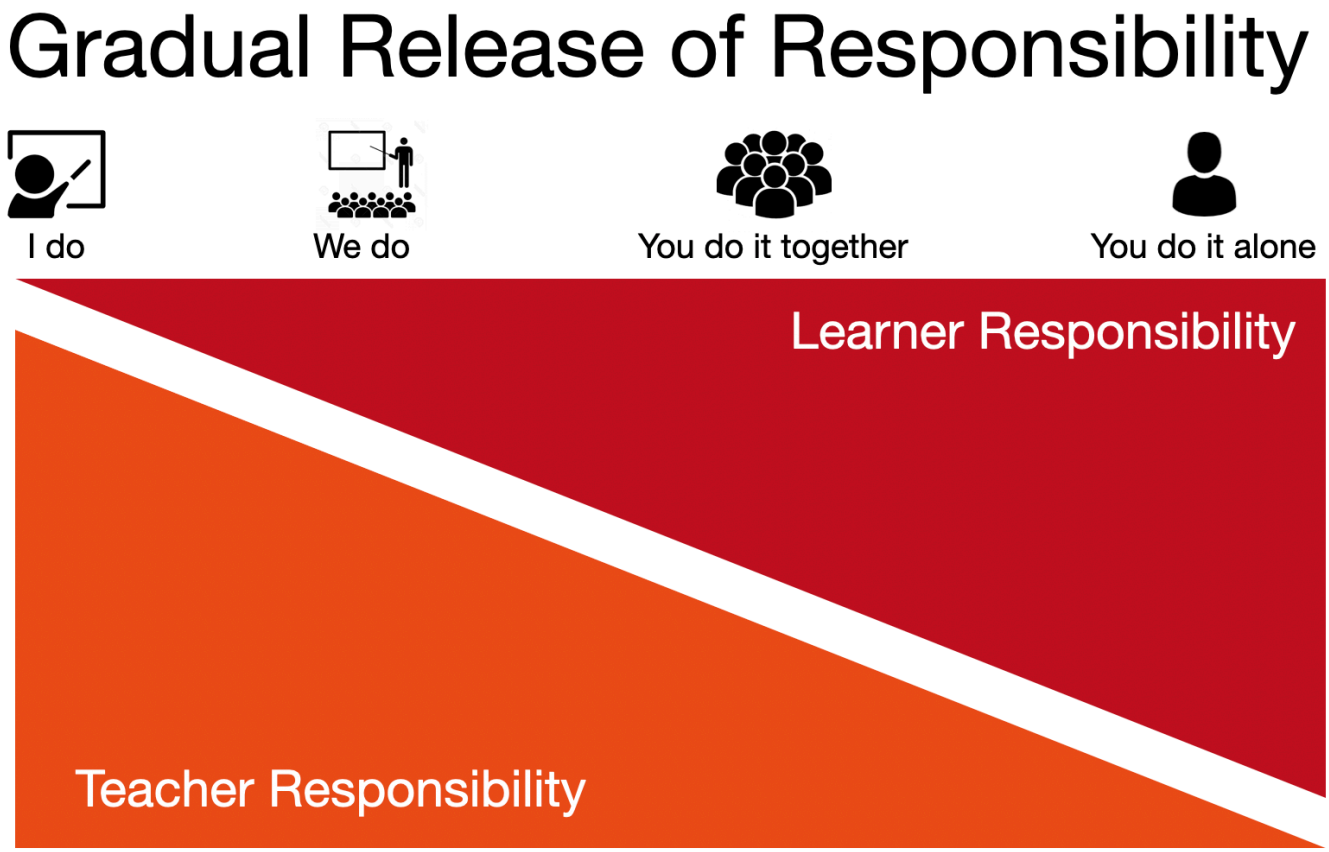
Step 2: Interdisciplinary Connections

Navigating through six to eight subjects per day can be tiresome, for both the student and the teacher. Additionally, when learning is isolated into subjects, students fail to make authentic applications of their learning and understand the way the skills and content must intersect in the real world. Further, the logistics of planning each subject area in isolation from one another can be more time and more work. If teaching remotely, teachers may get into the habit of assigning a work product for each subject per day. This translates to hours and hours of work creating or finding the activities and providing feedback.

- Make natural connections between subjects. For example, a science unit on animal habitats can be purposefully aligned with the Reading informational text standards and Writing informational text standards. This allows a student to dive into authentic texts about habitats, gathering information related to science standards and process and share that information through informational writing. This work, if transitioned online, may require more time, but it would be sustained and connected, rather than checking activities off of a to-do list.
- Interdisciplinary connections require more collaboration at the middle school and high school level than in a primary classroom since it involves several teachers. However, the ability to co-teach and even coordinate assessment may offer more reward down the line.
- There are various degrees of integration that can occur. On a smaller scale, teachers can recognize the opportunity for coordination. As an example, an English teacher who typically has students read autobiographies can offer several titles from Holocaust survivors because the students are learning about the Holocaust in Social Studies class. Coordination offers deeper learning for the students and a more unified and cohesive approach making the work more manageable and meaningful in the home environment.
- Year-long plans are an important first step to coordination and integration. Teachers can revise the order of their units so that the similar objectives align at the same points in the year.

Step 3: Gradual Release of Responsibility (See Figure 5)
As learning is designed, regardless of whether it will be delivered in person or virtually, Gradual Release of Responsibility (Fisher & Frey, 2008) should guide the work. This essential practice for instruction should be utilized whether a learner is a small child or adult or anywhere in between. In gradual release, the cognitive load is shifted from the teacher to the student and this can occur through the context of a single class period, several days, or several weeks depending on the learning goal.

Figure 5: Gradual Release of Responsibility



Focus Lesson - "I do"

- All new learning should begin with explicit instruction. The Focus Lesson, or mini-lesson, is a short period of instruction in which the teacher can establish the purpose and value of the learning and model the skill or strategy.
- A teacher should utilize the "think aloud" technique, expressing their thought process as they execute the skill and strategy.
- Utilize visual aids, such as anchor charts, to demonstrate the steps of a process. Focus lessons very often occur in a whole group setting.

Virtual Application:

- Focus lessons can be best delivered as recorded videos if a school uses applications such as Zoom, YouTube, Loom, or Screencastify to name a few. The video can be as simple as a teacher using a small white board to demonstrate the skill to utilizing the annotation and drawing tools on screen that some of the applications offer.

- Narrated PowerPoints, highlighting key points, can also be a focus lesson. However, it is important not to regurgitate the readings, but instead to provide examples and connections, and break down confusing content or theory.

- A benefit to providing pre-recorded focus lessons is that students are able to pause and replay the video as needed. Parents are also able to view the entirety of the lesson (and use translation tools as needed) so that they can support the student.

- The focus lesson, whether synchronous or asynchronous should be no longer than 8 minutes, and shorter for primary-aged students.

Guided Instruction - "We do it"

Once the instruction is modeled, students need to participate with the teacher's guidance. In this stage, students need to be given a novel problem, reading passage, or discussion prompts and the teacher provides support to students along the way.

- The teacher is the keen observer in this stage, formatively assessing, redirecting, cueing, and providing additional examples.
- Guided Instruction can be done in a whole group or small groups. This is an ideal time to differentiate as naturally some students will need re-teaching, different materials, or a different way of presenting the material and demonstrating their understanding.
- For some skills, you can move through the stages of Gradual Release of Responsibility very quickly while for other skills guided instruction spans several sessions over several weeks.

Virtual Application:

- Synchronous class sessions should be leveraged for social emotional check-ins, prayer, guided instruction, and collaborative work. Naturally, the amount of time that your class can be on a video call is limited, therefore it will be important to prioritize the guided instruction that needs to happen.

• Reference the focus lesson to remind students of the objective, then provide a new problem or question. Cue the students as they work through it together, continuing to model think aloud.

• Providing guided instruction in small groups on a video call provides more opportunities to formatively assess and support individual students.

• Allow the students to ask questions and provide the opportunity to stay on the call for more assistance or questions.

Collaborative Work - "You do it together"

The next stage is Collaborative Work. This stage should not be neglected because processing new learning with a peer helps to cement understanding.

- Teachers should provide new material, assign the students to pairs or small groups, and assign a task.
- Teachers should help students develop the language to provide cues to one another and ask prompting questions.
- The role of the teacher during Collaborative Work is to rotate among groups, providing feedback and direction as needed.

Virtual Application:

- Collaborative Work cannot be neglected during virtual learning. In fact, it is even more important that students remain connected to their peers and can experience companionship during a time that can be socially isolating.
- Collaborative Work can be accomplished during video calls, for example by using the breakout room function on Zoom. Assigning to breakout rooms and having students return to the main session can be quick and easy and therefore can be used for simple turn and talks, as a chance for students to articulate their understanding and questions to one another, or for more substantial group work as described above.
- Some collaborative work may occur in the absence of a teacher, just as group projects may be expected to be completed on students' own time, and therefore can be scheduled at the students' convenience. Teachers should be mindful of the amount of time students are required to work collaboratively beyond the protected synchronous video call time, as some families may be sharing devices and have limited bandwidth.
- Working with a partner can be offered as an option for students for the otherwise independent work which they are assigned.

Independent Work - "You do it alone"

The goal of instruction is for students to be able to independently demonstrate the skills. Therefore, teachers need to structure experiences for students to apply the knowledge and skills independently.

- Students should be able to demonstrate their understanding in varied ways - through writing, speaking, modeling, creating - and optimally be given choice in how to demonstrate their understanding.
- Teachers must explicitly model the expectations for the assignment including how it will be assessed.

Virtual Application:
Independent work can dominate remote instruction, and therefore care needs to be taken to incorporate all stages of Gradual Release of Responsibility and to only assign independent work when students are ready to engage in the work alone.

- Assess the work assigned through virtual instruction:
- What portion of the work is expected to be completed independently?
- Have students been adequately prepared or will they need to be overly reliant on a caregiver or sibling?
- Can this independent work be shifted to collaborative work with peers or small group instruction with a teacher?
- How are students expected to demonstrate their learning? Is there an over-reliance on writing/typing? Is there opportunity to incorporate varied methods of expressing understanding (recording videos on Flipgrid, drawing, modeling)

Universal Design for Learning and Differentiation
Our students are not one-size-fits-all therefore our curriculum cannot be. When designing units, teachers must consider:

- Multiple Means of Representation:
    - Do not overly rely on one resource or means of delivering content (i.e., textbook or lecture/presentation). Vary to include reading, videos, visual tools, and modeling.
    - Be sure to train your students on how to access accessibility tools on Google and their devices (text-to-speech, screen reader, contrast tools, zoom, etc.)
    - Add closed captioning to recorded videos. Most applications such as Screencastify have this feature.
- Multiple Means of Engagement
    - Particularly in the home setting, student motivation and engagement can be an issue.

- Students engage when they see value and purpose in the work. Be sure to set the stage with the purpose of the work and remind students of it often.
- Allow the students to make real world applications. It is difficult to feel motivated by practice exercises in a workbook. Allow students to ask questions and research. Solve problems. Create models. Conduct experiments.
- Give students choice. Allow them to choose what to read and what to write about. Choose to work alone or work with a partner. Choose to write their response or record it as an audio file.
- Incorporate gaming into your instructional design. See John Meehan's templates (https://edrenalinerush.com/author/meehanedu/) that can help you use Google tools to create digital escape rooms and virtual classrooms.
- Students disengage when they feel overwhelmed. It is important for teachers to coordinate assignments, deadlines, projects and assessments to ensure a manageable workload.

- Multiple Means of Action/Expression:
  - Do not overly rely on tests, exams, and quizzes for students to demonstrate what they know and can do.
  - Allow students to process and express understanding in multiple ways:
    Writing: essays, journals, blogs
    - Speaking: podcasts, videos
    - Visually: presentations, infographics, drawing
    - Tactile: models
  - Ensure projects are "minds-on" and not just "hands-on." They should be closely aligned to standards and the choice provided to students should not compromise the teacher's ability to assess on the standards.

Differentiation

If a curriculum is universally designed, there is not as great of a need to differentiate for individual students, as the curriculum will be varied enough to appeal to and work for many learners. However, there will still be some students who will not be able to succeed without additional levels of support. Consider these points related to differentiation:

- Estimate how long the assignment will take for the average students, but also for the student most accelerated and the student who works the most slowly in that subject area. Adjust accordingly for those students so that the amount of time they would spend on the work would be reasonable.
- Provide necessary scaffolds - sentence starters, graphic organizers, manipulative, number grids, etc.
- Chunk an assignment into discrete tasks.

Assessment
Never has it been more crucial to ensure that assessment is well designed and strategic. Both formative assessment, or checks for understanding, and summative assessment, to assess understanding at the end of a unit, need to be integrated into all units.

- **Formative Assessment:**
    - Should be frequent. A formative assessment is any opportunity for a teacher to check to see what a student understands.
    - Formative assessments during instruction (either in person or synchronous video)
        - Thumbs up, Thumbs down (physical, or utilizing reactions in Zoom)
        - White boards - have students solve a problem or answer a question on a white board and show it to a teacher. (can also use the chat box in Zoom)
        - Polls -While this feedback is anonymous it can give you a general sense for where the class is (Polleverywhere.com, Zoom poll function)
    - Formative assessment can be after instruction (with in person or synchronous video)
        - Exit tickets (paper and pencil or utilize Google forms or Socrative)
        - Reflection or Journal (video response on Flipgrid or Seesaw)
        - Progress check on independent work (submit draft for feedback, photos of progress on a project)
        - Conversation (in-person or virtual office hours, phone calls)

Summative Assessment:
- Must be aligned to the goals of the unit and be an authentic way to measure the students' progress of those goals
- Tests are just one way to measure a students' understanding and can be limiting especially when it comes to measuring application of skills. When administering tests, consider:
    - Can the test be given as an open-book test? If a test loses its integrity because a student can utilize available resources, it is important to question exactly what it is assessing and if it represents the most important learning of the unit.
    - Resist the urge to construct tests with low level questions such as identification of vocabulary, and details of history or stories. More important would be the ability to connect those details in the explanation or analysis of a novel question.
- Projects/Authentic Assessments - Projects must be closely aligned to the standards and ask students to construct their own knowledge by completing a task.
    - Projects should be aligned to specific criteria, explained on a rubric. These criteria should be based on the standards to be assessed rather than unrelated aspects such as "neatness."
    - Projects can be collaborative or individual, but assessment should be individual. This usually requires each student to describe their

understanding individually, perhaps through a written reflection, a video recording, or a teacher interview.
    - Students can have the opportunity to share their projects with other students. This can be done efficiently in a virtual environment since students can sign up for time slots to share in small groups or be placed in small groups through breakout rooms.
- Individual Assessments - Individual assessments are important, particularly in the early childhood environment. This provides the opportunity for the teacher to ask the child to perform a series of tasks independently to assess progress.
    - In the virtual environment, independent assessments can be conducted 1:1 through video conferencing. Teachers can assess things such as letter identification, number sense, and sight words easily with use of cue cards and personal white boards or paper and markers.
    - Teachers can administer running records/fluency probes through screen sharing passages on a video.
    - Individual assessments may become more possible in a virtual environment than they would in a school environment due to more flexible scheduling.

Feedback and Reporting (Grading)

There has been varied response to the issue of grading in the quick transition to distance learning this spring. Some schools and dioceses continued with the same grading practices as when school was in session, others transitioned to pass/fail. Some offered flexibility with deadlines or removed exams and specific requirements. Regardless of grading policies or method of delivery, there are best practices for feedback and reporting which should be adhered to:

- Students need frequent feedback on important tasks. Be clear with students on the type of feedback you will offer. If a student needs to complete practice exercises to build fact fluency, you don't need to provide specific feedback but can simply acknowledge their effort and timely submission with a "Great work!" However, if a student submits a draft of an essay they are working on, they need specific and direct feedback on how to make it better.
- Just because you provide a student with feedback, does not mean that you need to issue a grade. When a student is practicing, they need feedback for redirection; don't spend time assigning point values to those tasks. Grades should be issued only when a student is ready to demonstrate mastery independently.
- Report mastery on subject-level standards separately from participation or engagement. Grades need to accurately reflect the student's progress on a standard rather than reflect their responsibility in completing tasks. This looks like keeping track of assignment completion (tallies/percentage complete) separately from where you will score meaningful tasks aligned with standards.
- Don't issue zeros for incomplete or missing work! In fact, don't issue zeros at all. Reeves' (2004) *Case Against Zero* asserts that giving a student a 0 on a

100 point scale is a penalty that is impossible to recover from. Because an F has a 60 point range (0-60) with every other grade having only a 10 point range (60-70 = D), an F is five times more detrimental. Homework or participation that is marked as a 0 will have an unfair impact on students' overall grades. This is especially important to consider during remote delivery when outside factors such as internet access, caregiver support, quiet environment, emotional well being, and resources can have a great impact on completion. Consider issuing an incomplete until work can be completed or if you are issuing a failing grade, issue a 50 instead of a 0.

Accommodations and Modifications for Students with Disabilities

Classroom accommodations and modifications must be in place for students with services plans in place, yet naturally these are impacted by the method of instructional delivery. Consider the following recommendations:

- Make adjustments to forms for school-based service plans to include space for modifications/accommodations for remote learning.
- Hold annual review meetings with all families who have children with service plans prior to the school year (either in person or via Zoom). These meetings should be attended by parents, administrator, classroom teacher/s, special educator (if applicable), and anyone else who works with the child. During this meeting, review last year's plan, making any adjustments necessary to goals, accommodations and modifications. Specifically discuss strengths and challenges related to remote learning and adjust accommodations accordingly.
- Utilize root cause analysis when you hit challenging points with students with disabilities in engagement or behavior. There are likely many factors impacting those responses and it is important to get a clear picture of all of the potential causes and design interventions to impact the root, or leading causes.
- Proactively contact your LEA to discuss any services provided to your students through proportionate share. Create a plan to train any district employees entering your building on the new protocol. Discuss options for virtual support.

Support for English Language Learners

- Be sure parents and students are trained on translation tools (Chrome translator, Google translate, DeepL translator) and when and how they can use them.
- Record instructions for students using video or audioclips. This can allow parents and students who speak another language to run a translation tool in another open window while the video is running.
- Host office hours with someone in the school who can help with translating.
- Partner students up with a buddy who speaks the same language. Help them create a schedule to support each other. This could be prayer/Mass buddy.
- Schools should consider creating opportunities like Math Night or Literacy Night - either in person or virtually - to support families' knowledge of the "new

math" and other curricular areas . These events should be planned in any languages spoken at the school using native speakers whenever possible.
- Whether school is remote or in person, it is important to work with parents and families and truly make them partners.

Universal Screening and Interventions

It is predicted that students will begin next school year with a 30% loss in reading and a 50% loss in math (https://www.nwea.org/content/uploads/2020/05/Collaborative-Brief_Covid19-Slide-APR20.pdf). Therefore, schools must be ready to assess students, identify the gaps in learning, and plan strategic interventions to re-teach and fill the gaps.

- Schools should invest in universal screening (DIBELS, AIMSweb, NWEA Map, iReady, etc.) and administer benchmark screening three times per year. Schools must ensure that early literacy screeners are incorporated into universal screening.
- Schools must invest in intervention resources. Adaptive technology (Dreambox, Achieve 3000, etc.) may be considered as intervention resources that could be utilized at home or in school.
- Teachers and support staff can also be trained in research-based intervention strategies that can be delivered individually or in small groups (interventioncentral.org). If learning is virtual, teachers can utilize video conferencing platforms to provide interventions.
- Students can also engage in interventions independently. Teachers can issue specific word sorts to students (create on Seesaw or Google slides), or assignments to Echo read with a sibling.
- Schools should protect time in the schedule for interventions when students would not be missing core subject instruction. During this time teachers and staff members can be available for an all-hands-on-deck approach to intervention delivery.

Addressing Non-Compliance/Disengagement for Students in Remote Learning

- Set norms about student expectations (sitting upright, camera on, wearing appropriate clothing, mute unless you are speaking, etc.) and explicitly modeled and practice those expectations with students.
- Be kind.
- Determine the root cause of the behavior in order to match a successful intervention.
- Support the student and the family through collaboration rather than issuing consequences
- Meet with the student and set goals, create a schedule, break assignments down, provide non-online options if connectivity is the problem, shift due dates, if necessary.

Administrative Considerations
In order to put teachers in the best possible position for this fall, principals must provide the time and training needed to make these shifts.

Teacher Support:

- Avoid adopting any major new initiatives next year. Instead focus on improving teachers' craft of designing and delivering instruction both in-person and remotely.
- Protect professional development time at the end of the school year for curriculum planning for next school year. Make these active sessions. Provide templates and examples.
- More coaching, less sit-and-get professional development sessions. Teachers need to spend time with a peer, administrator or coach, review year-long plans and units, discuss essential outcomes, look at data, and collaborate on adjustments to make.
- Differentiate. Use these conversations to inform training needs for individuals. This could be as simple as pairing a teacher who is adept at Google classroom with a teacher in need of support.
- Set meaningful expectations. It may no longer be relevant to submit weekly lesson plans. Think about how you can best understand the teaching and learning that is happening and offer support.

Materials:

- Before investing in curricular materials for next year, survey the teachers on which materials were most flexible and helpful in the remote environment. Place priority on materials with digital access. Consider subscriptions to online programs that can fill the voids for materials students typically have access to in a classroom (i.e., leveled libraries).
- Make adjustments to student supply lists to include supplies students may need at home (i.e., individual white board and dry erase markers) and consider purchasing school supplies which can be sent home to families for home use (i.e., handwriting paper, construction paper, pattern blocks).

Guidelines for Asynchronous and Synchronous Lessons

Asynchronous:

- Focus lessons on outcomes based on standards
- Provide checklists or schedules stating what tasks need to be completed and when
- Instructions are clear and succinct
- Tools have been demonstrated for and used by students before
- Input is varied and meaningful
    - short videos or podcasts
    - short reading assignment
    - short writing/reflection, preferably in a forum like Edmodo, Google hangouts, a private Facebook page, etc. so students can interact with each other.

    - "Face to face" synchronous included using Zoom's breakout rooms
- Establish regular office hours that accommodate students who are sharing devices (e.g., 9-12 am and 4-7 pm)
- Maintain regular check-ins by the teacher

Synchronous:

- Greet students! Remind them why you are their favorite teacher :-)
- Make sure students know there will be social time.
- Develop a routine for synchronous sessions modeled after your class time:
    - Check in: Hello! How are you?
    - Establish a routine (i.e. Sing a song for younger students and ice-breaker activity for the older students)
    - Focus lesson/mini-lesson
    - Q & A
    - Say goodbye until next time
- Focus on outcomes based on standards
- Set norms about student expectations: sitting upright, camera on, wearing appropriate clothing, mute unless you are speaking, etc.
- Use breakout rooms or tools to put students in small groups
- Make your input brief and to the point
- Share your screen and share in the Chat feature so students can see your guiding questions
- Remind students of office hours and next steps

Early Childhood Learning Considerations for Remote Learning

To address the unique learning needs of preschool Students and kindergarten students:

- Keep it short whenever possible.
- Consider the impact this has on a family.
- Synchronous whole group should be brief but spread out throughout each week.
- Think of a check-in, a 10-minute read aloud or a 4-minute math demonstration and then a farewell.
- For Kindergartners, make every effort to offer small-group instruction for reading groups or math groups. The more hands on, the better.
- Choose your read aloud wisely. Will it be funny? Can it be soothing? What lesson can you all learn that is tied to religion? Can it be connected to social studies or science? Be really thoughtful about what you read aloud and use it for other learning.

Reminders about Literacy Instruction

All five areas of literacy (Comprehension, Fluency, Phonemic Awareness, Phonics and Vocabulary) are crucial to become a full, well-rounded reader. For older students, the phonemic awareness shifts to joining with vocabulary in studies of Greek and Latin roots and affixes. Some factors to remember (regardless of instructional setting)

- JOY! Reading should not be a drudgery of workbook pages. Be sure to include joy. Every task should have a purpose.

- Explicit and direct instruction: Show, Tell, and Model
    - when introducing a new skill like "change the y to i and add -es"
    - when introducing a new strategy like a self-monitoring tool like stopping at the end of a paragraph or page and giving a quick summary or "gist" of what it was about.
- Choice
    - If students need to practice a strategy like visualizing, you can show, tell, and model, and then the students can practice using a text of their choosing. You can control the choice by providing a limited amount of choice which ensures that the texts will be accessible: at the student's reading level.
    - If students are practicing sight words, give choices: write the words on a dry erase board, use sidewalk chalk to write the words outside, write the words on paper, tape one word each on hockey pucks or , and then use a hockey stick or tennis racket to hit a ball.
    - One challenge that students face when it comes to what they are reading right now is access. Schools and public libraries are closed. Offer free, online options like getepic.com, Time for Kids, NewsELA, Pioneer Valley Books, free content on Reading A to Z, and e-books from the public library with a library card are just a few.

- Small-group reading instruction
    - Meeting with students in a small group via Zoom, for example, means you can work on what skills and/or strategies that group needs.
    - Include ways to directly engage students like Zoom Polls or Socrative. Thumbs up/down works except that just like in real life students will watch what their classmates are doing if they don't know the answer. Their delay is information that you can use to reteach or possibly move the student to a different group.
    - Remember that groups should be flexible: don't keep a student in a group when they are ready to move (ready to move up: answers all of the questions almost of the time before anyone else; needs to slow down and move down: delays answers, gets answers wrong or says "I forgot")

A Word about Read Alouds…

Read Alouds are critical even in remote learning situations. Factors include:

- Can be a grade level or two above in difficulty
- Should be engaging, animated, and interesting for your current group
- Can be just for the pleasure of reading
- Can be used for instruction on a particularly difficult section of text

Promoting Catholic Identity in Remote Spaces

The fourth domain in the framework is maintaining Catholic identity. Given the great potential that learning may be online for many Catholic schools, parents will be closely examining the value proposition of their tuition dollar. In all honesty, parents are going to be asking a critical question: *Is what I am getting from the Catholic school worth the tuition dollar, especially if I have a no-cost option in the public school?* But, Catholic education is not a transactional arrangement. Rather, it is a transformational experience. The challenge in the new school configurations will be how does the Catholic school continue to provide the transformational experience.

Catholic schools have a two-fold charge: providing an education that is academically excellent and one that is deeply rooted in Catholic identity. The challenge, then, is to ensure that the education that is delivered (no matter what the mode of delivery) meets this standard.

There has to be a level of intentionality across all grade levels and all subject matter that course content is intentionally Catholic.

Factors that need to be addressed:

Liturgy and Prayer

- When face-to-face instruction is possible, school Masses will require their own protocol that will maintain the appropriate social distance. Attendance of parents and general community at the school liturgies may have to be suspended depending on local regulations.
- When delivering remote instruction, maintain the emphasis on school liturgy by streaming all-school Mass.
- Provide opportunities for daily prayer in community context.
- Support and make modifications to other faith-based activities that are important in the life of the school (retreats, prayer services, etc.)
- Increase opportunities for cross-grade faith sharing using virtual means (i.e. prayer buddies meeting virtually)
- Begin all synchronous video sessions with prayer, including soliciting prayer intentions from students

- Support the faith life of faculty and staff through community prayer and scripture study
- Invite parents and families to join in virtual prayer and faith life activities.

Catholic Identity

- Continue to imbue a Catholic worldview in curricular content areas.
- Connect the current events with a Catholic perspective (i.e. using the tenets of
- Catholic Social Teaching, the Virtues, etc.) as a framework to support understanding.

Presence of Leaders

- Ensuring the presence of the pastor in new school configurations.
- Reinforcing the role of the principal in the faith life of the school.
- Creating approaches to minister to families who experience food insecurity, financial issues, and other crises.

Service Learning Opportunities

- Promoting service learning experiences in virtual spaces.
- Finding opportunities in the current situation that would lend themselves to a community response (acknowledgements and prayers to first responders, food drives, etc.) .

Technology Support

The last domain in the framework is the technology infrastructure and support. Technology will not be the panacea for distance learning until systematic access and equity are addressed on a national level. Until such time, schools will need to provide alternatives to lack of devices, spotty internet connections, and families often dueling for limited bandwidth.

Factors that need to be addressed:

Multiple Paths for Access to Instruction

- Schools cannot rely on synchronous learning as a sole avenue of instruction. Rather it should create lessons incorporating both synchronous and asynchronous approaches to instruction.
- In addition to "high tech" options to provide learning opportunities, the school should consider any "no tech" options that might be available. This might require a pick-up day at school (with social distancing, mask use, etc.) for families to access classroom or school library books, art supplies, math manipulatives, etc.

Device Support

- If in a traditional school configuration, provide face-to-face practice in online learning to practice/troubleshoot issues for students.
- Record detailed videos for parents (using Screencastify or Loom) to demonstrate how to access and navigate any digital platforms you will be using.
- Ensure that all devices have the appropriate access to the needed technology (most devices are locked and therefore new apps can't be added after the fact).
- Create options for access for students to technology (loan programs for laptops, mobile hotspots, etc.).
- Coordinate the learning management system or platform (i.e. Google Classroom, Seesaw, Class Dojo (utilized by classroom teachers by school or grade band to streamline for families. Have teachers post all login information and links in one place.
- Develop a "Help Desk" for students to be able to easily access assistance with technology issues.

Safety and Security

- Review the school's Safety policies/Acceptable Use Policies.
- Clarify online communication policies with teachers.
- Ensure the school's firewall is updated and activated.
- Review applications and digital learning tools to ensure they comply with state and federal regulations for the protection of student privacy.
- Ensure students and parents are aware that the school's acceptable use policy will be enforced whether in school or at home. Parents are responsible for monitoring student's behavior when students are accessing programs from home.
- Remind students to keep passwords private and to reset passwords periodically.
- Educate parents and students on cybersecurity and digital citizenship expectations.

Epilogue:
Moving Forward with Hope

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat [or drink], or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?

Look at the birds in the sky; they do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are not you more important than they?

Can any of you by worrying add a single moment to your life-span?

Why are you anxious about clothes? Learn from the way the wildflowers grow. They do not work or spin.

But I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was clothed like one of them.

If God so clothes the grass of the field, which grows today and is thrown into the oven tomorrow, will he not much more provide for you, O you of little faith?

So do not worry and say, 'What are we to eat?' or 'What are we to drink?' or 'What are we to wear?'

All these things the pagans seek. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.

But seek first the kingdom [of God] and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides.

-Matthew 6:25-33

Now feels like an unprecedented time for Catholic education. The current challenges and forecasted threats to Catholic education seem unmatched. There are a myriad of feelings that accompany this-anxiety, fear…

Yet- this is not the first time that the Catholic education has faced these kinds of obstacles. A review of the annals of Catholic education reveals that there have been other existential challenges of this nature. The pioneers of Catholic education, mostly the religious women who established the Catholic schools in this country, blazed new paths and were able to find ways to ensure the viability of Catholic education. Even in the mid 1800's and the face of the Typhoid epidemic, the newly arrived Sisters of Mercy immersed themselves in serving the sick and dying. Truly-Catholic educators stand on the shoulders of the giants of the past.

But, this does little to mitigate the very real feelings that are associated with this situation. However, as people of faith, we have to gather our strength from our spiritual life. It is often reported that the command "Fear not" is exhorted in the Bible 365 times. A gentle, daily reminder that we are not alone. With this promise, we are empowered to adopt a holy sense of boldness, to help us move beyond *what is* to *what can be*.

> *"The Holy Spirit upsets us because it moves us, makes us walk, pushes the Church forward."-Pope* Francis

Given the obvious overwhelming situation, there could be a moment of grace to be discovered. Perhaps we are being challenged to find something new. Maybe, it would be a mistake to return to school, as if nothing happened. This situation can create disequilibrium and prompt questions upon which to reflect:

> How do we replicate the unanticipated discoveries that were made in this time of crisis and use them to innovate with new structures to better serve the mission of Catholic education?
>
> Can we challenge ourselves to abandon "business as usual" and to adopt a 'Holy Boldness' to implement new approaches to Catholic schooling?
>
> How have we left room for the Holy Spirit to *move us*, *make us walk* and to *push us forward*?
>
> What if this is our *cannonball* moment and our opportunity to walk a new path?

As Andre Gide states, "One does not discover new lands without consenting to lose sight of the shore for a very long time." The challenge then becomes how to find the delicate balance between "Fear not" and the anxiety caused by moving past the edge of our comfort. Again, another opportunity for us to grow with God and to surrender to God's care. St. Teresa of Avila exhorts us to "Let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you. Those who know God have everything. God is enough."

Nothing is Impossible with God

Can worrying about anything add a moment of life?

If God can take care of the birds of the sky
and the plants of the field,
Surely, God will take care of me.

Given the present challenges that we face,
Can worrying about this add a moment of life?
Yet-I continue to worry.

Lord, forgive my weakness when I worry,
for this challenges my trust in You

Good and Gracious God,
Help to me to remember that,
like the birds of the sky
and the grass of the field,
that You will take care of me.

Help me to recklessly surrender myself to You
boldly trust in Your everlasting care.

AMEN

RESOURCES

While we live in a different century, as we engage in pandemic preparation,
there is still much for us to learn from those
who have so courageously gone before us.

— Sister Patricia Talone, RSM

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