



# MATER DEI

## A CATHOLIC PREPARATORY SCHOOL

March 10, 2020

Mater Dei Prep Families:

The past few weeks of watching and waiting as news of a potential pandemic built has been concerning, and while we have tried to have school as usual, these do not seem to be usual times. A number of schools in NJ have recently closed or are preparing to shut down as the COVID-19 virus continues to spread across the state. Governor Phil Murphy has declared a state of emergency in all 21 counties based on 11 confirmed people including 2 residents of Monmouth County diagnosed with COVID-19 in NJ.

We are continuing to monitor updates from the CDC and NJ Department of Health, as well as staying in touch with local schools in the area and around the state. As of now, we do not know of any immediate exposure to COVID-19 within our Mater Dei Prep community nor do we know if or when we will need to close the school. While the CDC considers this to be a serious public health concern, based on current information, the immediate health risk from COVID-19 to the general public in the US is considered low at this time. As surveillance continues, it is expected that more cases will be identified.

Our hope is that if we spend the most possible effort and intellectual capital in devising our contingency plan, it may ensure that we never have to use it. It is certainly our most sincere hope that measures currently being taken by our school, the Department of Health, and all levels of governmental organizations will be successful in minimizing this potential outbreak. However, the possibility exists that our school like other schools in NJ will be closed in order to help control the spread of this virus.

If such a short or extended closure was to occur at Mater Dei Prep, we will be prepared to deliver continued valuable learning opportunities to students. The details of this distance learning plan will promptly be communicated to everyone with opportunities for questions and possible accommodations for students as needed.

As we monitor the latest updates on COVID-19, we are trying to balance caution with consideration. We want to be responsible, but not bow to the tendency to lean toward engaging with the hysteria that one can find in the media. The best way to get the most current news on Mater Dei Prep's response to the COVID-19 situation is the school's website at [www.materdeiprep.org](http://www.materdeiprep.org).

There are multiple aspects to education at Mater Dei Prep, and we hope to execute as many of them as possible, even if we find ourselves attempting to educate students remotely. While we are certainly eager to move forward with our curriculum in all disciplines, we are, as you all know, largely about the individual and intellectual interaction that takes place between all of those who are in the classroom every day. The interaction between student and teacher, and student and student, is at the heart of what we do, and will continue to be the focus of our distance learning plan.

Clearly, different classes have different expectations, and some will transition more readily to distance learning. We know that all of our teachers and students will be flexible as we figure out what works and what doesn't. In order for this to work, it is critical that each student have a computer—of virtually any type (mac, pc, Chromebook), or a fully functioning tablet, in addition to a solid Wi-Fi connection. While many of our students use their phones for a great deal of their computing, we have found that phones are not the most ideal for select classes.

In addition, over the course of the next few days, teachers will be speaking with students about what resources they might need to have at home in order for class to progress most readily. For example, students will want to make sure that they have textbooks at home. Students should expect to have assignments in all of their classes on PowerSchool, the classroom management tool currently used in classes on a daily basis at Mater Dei Prep. Each teacher will decide how this will work and communicate direction to their classes via email or PowerSchool.

Naturally, we will have to be flexible about possible distance learning for a certain period of time. In addition, we will almost certainly have situations where even our distance learning plan is interrupted for individuals—students and teachers alike—who may become ill. Should this occur, we know that there will be a great deal of feedback from every member of the community, so we all assume that there will be tweaks and alterations to this plan as it develops, particularly if this becomes an extended interruption of more than a week.

The fact is, all of us—students, teachers, and administrators, really like to be at school, and while we want to be ready, we hope that we find ourselves moving through the school year in a relatively normal way. These are, however, increasingly abnormal times, and we would be delinquent if we did not plan for them. Thank you so much for your patience in reading through this memo, and if it comes to pass that we have to enact this distance learning plan, I look forward to your feedback in order to make this experience as educationally valuable as possible.

To obtain the most current guidance and updates on COVID-19, please visit:

- [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html)
- [www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/ncov.shtml](http://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/ncov.shtml)
- [www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus](http://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus)

For feedback, questions or concerns regarding this communication or our Mater Dei Prep response to the COVID-19 Virus, please contact Dan DeShong at [ddeshong@materdeiprep.org](mailto:ddeshong@materdeiprep.org) or on the Mater Dei Prep website's home page, [www.materdeiprep.org](http://www.materdeiprep.org)

Stay Healthy,



Dr. Simon Bosco  
Chair, Mater Dei Prep Board of Trustees