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Catholic School Administrator Covid-19 Crisis Strategic Planning Document

Rationale: This planning template will help you bring the essential dimensions of your Catholic school to your new, distance learning context. It is designed to address the critical attributes of a Catholic school as described in the [The Catholic School](#) which was developed by the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education in 1977.

Use the parts of this worksheet that are helpful so you can think more intentionally about a plan for leading your school through the crisis and help your community in a unique way that contributes to the saving work of the Catholic Church.

Your Leadership Support Network

It is important to remember you are not alone. You are a part of a larger Catholic school network with other people to help you.

Who is in your leadership network that can help you navigate and fulfill your responsibilities during the pandemic? These are people, local or distant, who you can use as a sounding board, collaborator, or resource. What regular pattern of interaction can you establish to ensure you stay strong and healthy in your leadership of your community?

Ideas:

Your Health and Spiritual Support

You will be going through a crisis and leading others through it at the same time. You may experience personal and even spiritual struggles as the crisis unfolds. Leading in a time like this is incredibly difficult and you will need to take care of yourself so you have something to offer others.

What pattern of prayer and faith enrichment will you continue or initiate to remain strong and spiritually focused during the crisis?

How will you stay healthy and positive? How can you tap into hobbies, activity, exercise, music,



art, and nature to stay strong so you can lead in crisis?
Administrative Spiritual Leadership
What CURRENT things are you doing to provide spiritual leadership in your school community (teachers, parents/guardians, students)? How will you transfer this to the new ways you will be doing school? At a distance? Online? Is it possible? How?
What NEW or ADDITIONAL spiritual leadership can you provide parents, students, teachers during this time of crisis? How can you do this online or using other means?
Can you collaborate/ coordinate with other administrators and spiritual leaders (e.g., pastor, chaplain, music ministers, music teachers, art teachers, campus ministers, etc.) to make your spiritual leadership more powerful? How?
Can you bring in additional spiritual resources (e.g., refer to recommended media resources) for support? Which ones? How will you share them?
Given the unique community of your school, is there anything you need to do to include everyone in your spiritual leadership and support? (e.g., Do you need to ensure translations for non-native speakers of English? Do you need to include resources that reflect an awareness of different faith traditions practiced by families?, etc.)



Christian Outreach to Families

The school should demonstrate the love of Christ to its community. If it does not, it undermines all it hopes to teach.

How will you provide material and other assistance to families so that students can get what they need to keep learning? Can you (or your designee e.g., PTA, counselors, media/technology specialist, etc.) bring members of the community together to share resources? Can you partner with other schools to share resources? Are there resources in your local school district (e.g. counselors) or community (e.g., library services, food banks, etc.) available to schools in general and at this particular time?

If a family is struggling with tuition payments or other pressing financial needs, do you have a means, message, or policy to support them? What is it? Are there special “friends” in your community (e.g. senior parishioners, alumni, etc.) who might be able to be supportive of these needs?

If one of your families becomes ill from Covid-19 or needs other support during this difficult time, can you protect their privacy (if appropriate) but also create networks of support in the community for them?

What spiritual and emotional support can you put in place if people need someone to talk to gain emotional, mental or spiritual support? Are there people in your school (e.g., guidance counselor), parish (e.g., pastor, parishioner who is a social worker, etc.) or diocese (e.g., Ministry worker) available to help when needed?



Providing Christian Witness

Mobilizing students, families and your larger community to witness the love of Christ to others is both educational and part of the mission of a Catholic school.

How will you challenge, inspire, and enable your community to come together with one another at this time in prayer and action? How can you connect them to the parish and larger community of the Catholic Church (across the diocese and globe)? How can you motivate your community to join in solidarity with the human family close-by and around the globe?

How will you include other volunteers in the parish or school community to support the needs of your school community?

How can your school community reach out to those outside it (parish, neighborhood, other) it to practice care and concern for others safely?

Are there existing service learning projects that can be performed during the crisis? Are there other service learning projects that should be substituted instead?

Support for Teachers

To lead others, teachers need direction, support and encouragement from you. They will also benefit from encouragement to work together as a professional and spiritual community.

How will you communicate with your teachers about the important mission and opportunities they have as Catholic school educators during this crisis? How will you inspire them? Communicate your trust in them? Convey your support?



How will you support your teachers so they can stay healthy and spiritually strong as they lead their students and families?
How will you create conditions for your teachers to do their best work--especially as they are dealing with their own disrupted situations and struggles?
Can you clarify your priorities and expectations, answer questions, offer resources, encourage their creativity, help them be strategic, reduce non-essential functions, give them a partner, help them problem-solve? Other?
What means do you currently have for meeting together as a faculty group? How will you continue those means or transform them to happen remotely?
For example: it might be helpful to do shorter, more frequent check-ins or to provide more grade-band time together. Don't stick to the conventional if it doesn't work now.
How will you provide teachers a community to celebrate, problem-solve, trouble-shoot, commiserate, socialize, etc. What can you do to provide spaces like the teachers' lounge? Or happy hour?
What expectations will you have for the amount of time a teacher will be working to support their learners during this crisis? Will you ask them to confine their work to the typical school day or allow them to work flexible hours if more appropriate for their learners? How available will you expect them to be for questions outside the "work day" and "work week?"



<p>What worries do teachers have? (e.g., Challenges adapting to online instruction, worries about being laid off, etc.) Can you address these? How will you communicate genuine care for their well-being?</p>
<p>What procedures and policies will you have for teachers' communication with parents/students? What technologies will they use? How will privacy and work/life boundaries be maintained? What guidelines will you have for what time, how rapidly and how often communications happen?</p>
<p>When will you revisit and "tweak" these supports for teachers? It may make sense to have a trial period and adjust accordingly.</p>
<p>How will you communicate to teachers individually and accompany them as they address their own instructional challenges or support the needs of their students?</p>
<p>What plans for alternative communication will you have for your teachers should there be network or telecommunications disruptions?</p>
<p>What plans will you have for administrative coverage should you or a family member fall ill?</p>
<p>Student Participation and Attendance</p>
<p>How will you take attendance and ensure student participation? What measures will you use?</p>



What standards will you have?
How will you intervene if a student is not participating? What is the proper procedure? Is there variation given special circumstances? What will a teacher's role be? What will your role be? How will parents be involved? How can you identify and recognize the issues that are involved in a lack of will or ability to participate?
How will you account for a student's illness? How will you instruct teachers they should provide support when a student misses school? Will you encourage them to archive materials, activities and communication with your students?
School Celebration of Faith, Liturgy, and Prayer
Communal experiences of faith, liturgy and prayer are not just part of a Catholic School's identity but part of its vitality. They enable the community to live and join together as Church. This is even more essential during a crisis.
What methods do you CURRENTLY have of supporting your students' faith development and celebration of prayers and liturgies? Which of these are able to make the transition to distance learning?
What NEW POSSIBILITIES are there for supporting faith development, liturgy and prayer due to the current conditions (e.g., available technology, a reduction in other activities and deep need for God, the opportunity to connect the school with families/the Domestic Church, need for support in a crisis)?



How can you enable community prayer or other faith activities that do not require your facilitation or oversight? Are there ways these can respectfully include support for non-Catholic students and families without undermining the Catholic nature of activities?

How will you re-create some of the beautiful “brick & mortar” celebrations of liturgy and prayer at a distance? How can you maintain student involvement in the process of liturgical planning and practice? Who can help with this?

How can you include EVERYONE in these celebrations? Consider English Language Learners and their families, special needs learners, students with limited technology access, etc.

Are there people in the community who normally wouldn't be able to participate in school liturgies and other celebrations who could now be included in these experiences? (e.g., infirm, socially isolated parishioners, working parents, etc.) How can you bring them into your community celebrations?

Strengthening the Domestic Church >>[link to USCCB ideas](#)

The current crisis provides both a NEED and an OPPORTUNITY for Catholic schools to support the Domestic Church (usually considered to be families). It can be difficult for this connection to happen when schools assemble during work hours, there is an abundance of after school activities, scheduling conflict, and transportation required. At this special moment, there is an opportunity for families to be together and for the school to enter home to support students and families. Schools can be a part of strengthening the lives and faith of those they serve..

How can you support the faith development of families during this time? Who can help you (e.g., pastor, DRE, ministers, etc.)? How can you support families, especially as they are more disconnected from the “church” as a building and become potentially more aware of “Church” as a theological mystery and community of believers who hope to live the love of Christ and acknowledge a reality that is quite different than the majority in culture recognize?



Be sure to check out these resources from the [McGrath Institute for Church Life Blog](#) including one on ways to [participate prayerfully in an online mass](#), [design lessons for catechists](#), and more

What faith-based resources can you share with parents and their children as they struggle with social distancing and deal with trauma?

Parents need support as well as students. It will be very important to present resources that reinforce the Christian understanding of reality.

Webinar from the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry, "[Accompanying Children and Families with Social Distancing](#)"
 Edutopia "[How to Help Teens Shelter in Place](#)"
 National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry [Resources for Covid-19](#)

How will you help families struggle with the deep questions and concerns (e.g., the problem of suffering, struggles with belief, retaining hope in spite of tragedy, etc.) associated with this crisis?

["The Face of Prayer"](#) Q & A resources for catechesis

What resources or advice can you offer parents as they work to explain the world crisis to their children and help them make sense of the crisis and its implications a developmental level?

Academic Support

A school isn't a school without high-quality learning. But RIGHT NOW academics have to come second to a Catholic school's primary mission-- the saving action of the Church. The reason NOT to cancel schools entirely is to help maintain normalcy (i.e., reduce panic) NOT because learning HAS to happen at the same rate as before. This can get caught up later.

As things settle out, learning will be easier to transfer online. High-quality learning involves rich content, supportive classroom structures (procedures, community connections, etc.), developmentally and subject-appropriate pedagogy, trusting relationships, parent-teacher communication, consistency, and more.

What will you do to support teachers developing a schedule for student learning that has structure but is also flexible? That promotes health and well-being as well as academic progress? That



adjusts given the challenges of learning by distance in the home (e.g., sharing devices, no printers, network outages, no internet, sibling interactions, limited parental supervision, options for students opting out, etc.)?

It may help to consider what components are in the schedule now? Which things will get dropped? Which should be kept? Remember, constraints that we work with in a regular school are no longer problems and can be worked around (e.g., sharing physical spaces, working around “special” schedules, etc.) but new things are present (e.g. students are on different schedules, they have different levels of resource, etc.)

Also remember that in the schedule, flexibility is critical because people are stressed and their situations are changeable. Easing up on volumes of work and daily homework to give parents an opportunity to do a lot of work at once rather than a little all the time. Students can be expected to do a minimum of work and then have additional work to do as they are able. Focus on major objectives and cut busy work. Help your teachers think in terms of priorities. Stress makes strategic thinking difficult and teachers may need some specific recommendations for how to structure time.

How will you encourage teachers to understand the importance of their behaviors as ministers and healers at this particular time? How will you help them understand how this role is prioritized in relation to their role as educator?

How will you help teachers develop messages and means for communicating that allow students to practice hope, develop resilience, and perseverance?

ASCD- [Finding the Upsides in Uncertain Times](#)

What professional development will you offer teachers with regard to teaching online or via distance in the traditional academic subjects?

ISTE/ EdSurge- [Learning Keeps Going](#)
[Pandemic Pedagogy](#)



What professional development and resources will you offer to catechists?
McGrath Institute for Church Life Resources
How will you help your teachers assist one another as they learn and develop proficiency with online pedagogy? Share resources with one another? How will you connect them to your diocesan network and those outside it?
What instructions will you offer teachers to differentiate for the various contexts students find themselves in?
What instructions will you offer teachers who may uncover severe problems with student learning or possibly deeper problems in a home?
What plans will you have for supporting a teacher in crisis? How can you support a teachers should he/she or his/her family member fall ill?