



# Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown

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## **MEDIA ADVISORY**

### *Diocese Announces Plans for Catholic Schools*

(ALTOONA, PA) – In-person classes will resume at all Catholic schools in the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown this fall.

Earlier this summer, each school location was tasked with reviewing the logistics of returning to in-person classes and establishing a specific plan for the 2020-2021 academic year. All schools submitted their blueprint to the Diocesan Education Office, and Director of Education Jo-Ann Semko reviewed and approved each plan.

“Since our diocese and our schools land in different zones for the state, we decided to have plans on a school-by-school basis, and in some cases a building-by-building basis because some of our schools have more than one building,” Semko stated.

Each school site brought together a team of stakeholders to develop the plan including physicians, nurses, and other healthcare workers, as well as parents, teachers, and administrators.

All of the plans are similar in that they all follow CDC and state guidelines, Semko stated. Differences in the plans stem from the public school district in which each location falls. The collaboration with school districts is largely linked to Catholic schools’ reliance on the district for transportation.

All Catholic schools in the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown are scheduled to resume in-person classes between mid-August and early September.

When in-person classes were halted in mid-March, all Catholic schools in the diocese seamlessly transitioned to virtual learning, allowing Catholic education to continue without any interruption.

Educators in the diocese are currently in the midst of training for a new learning management system – Schoology – that would allow for an even easier transition to virtual learning, should the need arise again later in the school year. Students and parents will receive training information on the new system.

“We consider our students our kids,” Semko said. “Whatever we are doing, we would do the same for our own children. We love them very much, and we’re definitely going to do everything we can to make sure that they are safe, we are safe, and anyone who comes in our buildings are safe.”

Each Catholic school in the diocese is instructed to post its return plans on its website. Links to the schools’ websites are also available on the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown website under the Education Office. There are 13 Catholic elementary schools throughout the eight-county diocese and four independent Catholic high schools.