



BISHOP DWENGER HIGH SCHOOL

Office of the Principal

June 29, 2020

Dear Bishop Dwenger Family,

You would think the last thing on any teen's mind in early July is returning to school, but I firmly believe this question is on **everyone's** mind. Undoubtedly, we have all experienced a unique and worrisome spring, as we had no choice but to accept the "new norms" of social distancing, self-quarantine, Zooming online (remote) learning, and wearing face masks while perpetually applying hand sanitizer. I think Purell became the new aromatherapy (*I cannot get that smell out of my car*). I don't know about you, but I am ready to return to something that's familiar. I am sure our parents are ready for their children to go back to school, and the students are ready to see their friends and teachers. There was a funny, short video that was going viral back in early May of a mother pulling the family van up to a school's drop-off as the children are pushed out (falling on the ground) along with their bags and supplies, then the van speeds off with the caption: *The First Day of School 2020-21*.

Maintaining a sense of humor helps feed our optimism. We are also a people of faith -- a people of hope. A huge source of our optimism was found in the special bonds that our teachers and staff have with our families. I am grateful for the sacrifice, determination, and guidance our teachers gave during this time. As I met with each teacher through the month of June, I discovered a common story being told. All our teachers spent many hours (usually staying up past midnight) each day to plan, record their lesson, grade, and communicate with parents and students. I am aware that students spent 5-6 hours each day on their work. How many were aware that the teachers spent at least twice that amount of time each day? I applaud the students that understood this was not a vacation, followed the expectations set by the school, maintained a routine, and had the discipline and the maturity to successfully complete their courses.

I also want to thank our diocesan leaders and those in the Catholic Schools Office for being ever-present through this trying time. Our administration team has been in frequent contact with diocesan principals and the superintendent in weekly online conferences. Dr. Joe Brettnacher (Superintendent of Catholic Schools) has been in constant contact with other superintendents throughout the state, as well as Governor Holcomb's office. He has been a stalwart source of answers and common sense. This momentum cannot be lost in those lazy-hazy-crazy days of summer. We are currently drafting a "return to school" template and action plan, using the In-Class Covid-19 Health & Safety Re-entry Guide from the Indiana Dept. of Education. Most importantly, we are using local and state health experts to review and approve our plans. **The final, approved plan for returning to school will be revealed to our BD community later in July.** Please look over the *New Health Protocol* (from the CDC) from our school nurses in the 2020-21 flyer (enclosed and electronically sent). A few things that we are planning for our students involve the high possibility of wearing masks when social distancing is impossible, such as in full classrooms, hallways, and waiting in lunch lines. Therefore, it is imperative that EVERY student wear a student ID card on a lanyard which will be worn around their necks EVERY day. We will be issuing the required lanyard to every student on Verification Day. The BD staff takes great pride knowing each student; however, it became very clear on the first day of locker clean-out May 26 (with seniors) that we did not recognize $\frac{3}{4}$ of the students with their faces covered. The ID lanyard will be required for ALL students and BD staff. The 2020-2021 Student/Parent Handbook has been posted online and will be available on Canvas. Please be sure to review the handbook for changes in Dress Code, as well as other key updates.

What surfaced immediately from our remote learning experience was that the teachers and students evolved in becoming more tech savvy and comfortable in using multiple platforms to learn from, post things, and communicate. This is a major part of the 21st Century Skills that you have likely heard us write or talk about.

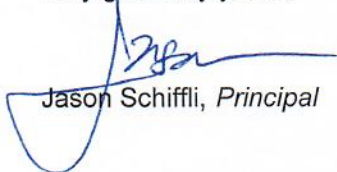
The administration has also embraced the use of more technology during this time. So, as we enter a more inclusive and robust future in using technology to help with efficiency and convenience, I have enclosed an information sheet (flyer) that explains which Verification Day forms are now posted online. For our veteran families, they know how much time this will save! We will soon send this flyer electronically to every registered family. Then you can click on the **Important Links** from home. Hopefully we have eliminated the long lines on Verification Day.

I recall last year's Verification Day was the ominous springboard to what widely became known as the parking lot controversy. This year's permits will be sold and cataloged electronically. Students will have to prove possession of an IN driver's license (something that was forgotten on Verification Day last year). Undoubtedly, the number of parking spaces available to students has changed over the past 10 years. This is mainly due to more staff being added over the years, more required spaces for Visitors and Disabled Drivers, and restricted "red spaces" designated for snow removal. The spaces that are restricted to snow removal in the Fall and Winter, will be assigned to students in the Spring at a prorated price. Let's be kind and patient about the parking situation at BD. The school fielded many unpleasant calls last year from parents who found there were no more spaces to assign. I cannot urge families enough to carpool. If your student(s) must drive into town, but cannot park at BD, they can "legally" park at Northcrest, behind Kohl's, and have a BD friend that has a parking permit bring them from there to school. That large lot is used by other people seeking the spaces for the same purpose. Please be optimistic. Although it is a minor inconvenience, it is a solution.

Please give special attention to important dates, sign up to receive the school's weekly electronic newsletter: *The Halo*. Much anguish and frustration can be avoided if families are aware of important dates and current news. Speaking of current news, we have a few people that I want to recognize and thank for their dedicated and selfless service to our BD community. Chris Svarczkopf, who has been at BD for the past 18 years as an administrator, teacher, coach, and mentor, will be retiring. Mr. Svarczkopf has been outstanding Catholic witness and role model for our students, athletes, and faculty. I cannot say enough about his positive impact on our school and to me personally. I will miss him greatly! Laura Elden, who has been a devoted member of the office support staff for the past 14 years (most recently in the Attendance Office), has decided to retire. Mrs. Elden did an outstanding job with Project Linus, Spell Bowl (assistant coach), and used her unique wit and creative spirit to post lively news, birthday wishes, inspirational-spiritual quotes, and assorted greetings on the message screens throughout the school each day. We congratulate Colleen Baxter (Theology) and Lindsay Bessesen (English) with their new bundles of joy. They both have decided to focus their attention (and love) on their new growing family. We wish them all the best and are very happy for them and their husbands. We also wish our best to Caleb Kruse (Theology) as he returns to the seminary. We were blessed to have Mr. Kruse this past year, as he remained in discernment. Lastly, we say, "Goodbye," to Jessica Hayes. Miss Hayes will now be a staff member in the office at St. Vincent's Catholic Church. Miss Hayes has many great talents and will undoubtedly make a huge and indelible impact in her new career, like she did over the past 20 years as a remarkable and highly regarded theology teacher and mentor to her students and colleagues. We are very grateful for her time in transforming lives and souls while being devoted to our Saints.

As I close this this very long letter, I want to thank the BD community for their witness to faith and perseverance over the past three months. You have been the light to your children, family, neighbors, friends, and to me. Light gives us clarity, it illuminates possibilities, and brightens our paths. The uncertainty that brings darkness cannot overcome the light you give – the light of Christ shines from you, throughout our BD Family. Our school community is arguably more important today than at any time. I cannot think of a gift that's greater, more giving, and lasting, than your student's development into beacons of Christ's light as they live out their mission as a *Citizen of Two Worlds*.

Very gratefully yours,



Jason Schiffli, Principal