



DELONE CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

"Be Doers of the Word"

** FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE **

Media Contact: Lauren Gross

Director, Strategic Communications

e-mail: lgross@delonecatholic.org

Phone: 717.637.5969 Ext. 224

Delone Catholic Celebrates One Month of In-Person Learning

#SquireStrongStart Campaign a Team Effort

MCSHERRYSTOWN, Pa. – Delone Catholic High School is celebrating one month of full-day, in-person instruction for its 342 students in grades 9-12. The freshman class reported on Aug. 24, and the full student body arrived on Aug. 25. Since then, school has been held in-person, five days a week, with no interruptions.

“When we made the decision to come back to full-time, in-person learning, we knew we would be facing challenges,” Interim Principal Donna Tompkins P’06, P’10, said. “We were determined to bring our kids back and give them the education they deserve.” That determination meant that teachers and administrators worked tirelessly over the summer to put safeguards in place and to determine how to educate students while also preventing the spread of COVID-19.

All students are required to wear masks or face shields during all classes, with regularly scheduled mask breaks. Class sizes are limited, and arrivals and dismissals are staggered to limit the number of students in hallways. The school switched from two to three lunches, thus reducing the number of students in lunch every period by 70. All faculty, staff, and students are required to complete a daily COVID-19 screening. Participation by students earns them a dress-down “Freedom Friday.” So far this year, compliance has been greater than 95 percent every day. On Friday, Sept. 18, students were treated to ice cream at lunch as a sign of appreciation for all their hard work in complying with COVID-19 guidelines.

-- more --

“We made a number of changes to how the school operates before school began,” Dean of Students/Athletic Director Tim Bonitz said. One of those changes includes switching to a block scheduling format to minimize the movement of students between classes, as well as to allow for deep-cleaning of classrooms. The block scheduling also means that students stay with their own cohorts, making contact tracing easier.

“Our building maintenance supervisor, Tony Poist ’78, used tape to mark stairways as either ‘up staircases’ or ‘down staircases,’ as well as marking the hallways to ensure students are able to maintain adequate distancing when moving between classes,” Bonitz added.

What has impressed everyone is the willingness and adaptability of the students to abide by the new rules. “We are asking a lot of our students – they’re doing longer class periods, they have restrictions on how they can interact with their friends during school – but they’re doing what we’re asking of them, and they’re doing it willingly and cheerfully,” Tompkins said.

For the teachers, the pivot to virtual learning in the spring gave them a starting point for how they planned to teach in the fall. “We learned a lot from our experience with remote learning last spring and we are using those lessons to make things better this year for both the virtual and in-person learners,” Julia Fuhrman, Social Studies Department Chair, said. “Over the summer, our staff trained to become Google Suite Certified Educators and we’ve moved to using a single platform for delivering content and assignments to our students.”

“We also conducted a program at the beginning of the school year that we called #SquireStrongStart that introduced or reviewed many of the tech tools that students will need for a blended learning environment,” Fuhrman added. “#SquireStrongStart also incorporated lessons on gratitude, goal-setting, academic honesty, and digital citizenship. We wanted all students to be prepared with a good foundation of skills, no matter what the school year might hold for us.”

One thing is clear; no matter the challenges and obstacles, Delone Catholic’s faculty and staff are committed to continuing in-person education for Squire Nation. “The students just really want to be here, to be in school, to be learning, and we want them here,” Tompkins said.

-- end --