

ST. PAUL CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

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St. Paul Catholic High School Begins Distance Learning in the Midst of the Coronavirus Crisis

Bristol, CT – March 19, 2020 – What a difference a week makes. St. Paul students were in the halls and classrooms last Thursday and today the school building was eerily empty. During this Coronavirus Crisis, St. Paul administration has taken steps in these unprecedented times to continue with their mission of educating young minds, hearts and spirits, albeit in an unconventional way. When the Archdiocese of Hartford made the announcement last week, that in-person classes would be suspended until at least March 31, the school adopted a virtual, distance learning plan.

After preparing and training for possible school closure days before the announcement came, the St. Paul administration and faculty created a meaningful and supportive distance learning plan. The goal was to keep students on a "normal" school day schedule while in the comfort of their new, home workspace. While not the same as in-person classroom learning, Zoom.com gives students and faculty a way to interact each day as if they were physically together. Mr. James Cooper, Dean of Academic Life states, "While we would never be able to achieve a perfect match in the virtual environment, our students and teachers are going where St. Paul Catholic High School has never gone before! They are joining live sessions so that class discussions/instruction can continue across all classes and academic disciplines." Students and teachers see and hear each other, and students can raise their hand virtually to be called on.

The shortening of this week's instructional time gave faculty time to effectively plan their online courses while giving students time to process the transition of what their new normal would be without overwhelming them.

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Mrs. Elizabeth Kelly, St. Paul teacher says - "I am so grateful that teaching active and engaged online lessons are totally possible! I am pleased to see my students showing up and participating in class. It makes this entire situation more acceptable and proves that real learning can still take place remotely. It has been more challenging but it is rewarding. I am happy to still be able to live out my vocation as a teacher."

"I am incredibly proud and inspired by the enthusiastic response of our faculty in creating a meaningful and supportive distance learning plan in order to meet our student's educational needs." says Mr. Cary Dupont, President. He continues, "No doubt, this will be a transition for everyone. One that will require patience, flexibility, understanding from all ... and certainly commitment and personal motivation from our students."

On Wednesday, March 18, 2020, students began their school day at 7:57 a.m., logging in to receive live instruction from their A period teacher while at the same time having meaningful discussions with their classmates. At 12:17 p.m. they logged off to enjoy a 20-minute lunch at home, and then logged back on to start G period, continuing until the end of school day at 2:12 p.m.

So impressive! Thank you for all the hard work that obviously went into making it such a seamless transition. Loved hearing the teachers reconnecting with their students! - Marci Aldi '89, Class of 2022 parent.

"This experience has opened new possibilities for students and teachers beyond the four walls of the classroom and demonstrated how a caring, compassionate and dedicated community can come together in even the most difficult and challenging of circumstances." says Mr. Cooper

Lisa and Dave Millerick have three children at St. Paul, now online learning at home, Lisa states, "St. Paul gathered together to keep our school a true community. Hearing the laughter and engagement over virtual classrooms has brought a smile to our faces throughout the day. The faculty and administration's dedication to their students is truly inspiring and will help us all to really remember what matters in times like this."

Daughter Sami '22 says, "It's really great to be able to see all of my classmates and friends, even if it's not in person."

Son Chris '21 says, "I have been able to learn and focus extremely well and it's working better than I expected."

Daughter Natalie '20 says, "As a senior, this has been really hard and it all came so suddenly. Through it all the teachers and staff have been very supportive. I appreciate how much effort they are putting in to give us a "normal" school life."

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Yesterday, in an email to parents and faculty titled "Day 1 (or Day 121)", Mr. Dupont wrote, "Congratulations, we did it! This memorable day will certainly go down in the history of St. Paul! It was an awesome first day on many fronts. I couldn't be prouder of our entire team of professionals and more thrilled and inspired by the participation and engagement of our students. This was no small feat and today, we witnessed what greatness looks like when we all come together."

Attached: Photos of students' first day of online learning

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St. Paul Catholic High School, established in 1966, is a coeducational secondary school of the Archdiocese of Hartford, serving 430 students from over 35 communities in central Connecticut. Our vision, to be a truly great Catholic high school, is achieved by living our core values of Faith, Character, Community, Excellence, and Service.

For more information, please contact Melissa Lindquist in the Office of Advancement via email at mlindquist@spchs.com.