

Fairhaven's St. Joseph Catholic School retains full staff during pandemic

When Governor Charlie Baker closed all of the schools on Friday, March 13, 2020, all of the Catholic schools within the Diocese of Fall River were able to pivot to a robust remote learning platform on Monday, March 16, 2020. As the weeks turned into months and it became apparent that the end of the school year would end remotely, Catholic school leaders began to plan for the return to school for the 2020-21 academic year.

St. Joseph School in Fairhaven initiated their "Back to School" plans early in the summer amid many uncertainties brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite these uncertainties, the school leaders had a goal to retain all of the faculty and staff from the 2019-20 school year, as many local organizations experienced layoffs due to severe reductions in revenue brought on by the pandemic.



St. Joseph School photo.

Throughout the summer as revisions were made to the “Back to School” plan, St. Joseph’s realized that retaining their full staff was achievable as well as ideal under the new social distancing guidelines set forth by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Massachusetts Department of Health. Moreover, an initial concern about enrollment early in the summer turned into an uptick in inquiries and ultimately an increase in students from the prior year.

“We are so blessed to have a dedicated and passionate faculty and staff,” says Faith Piazza, principal of St. Joseph School. “There were so many changes and unknowns early in the summer that made our goal very challenging. That said, our staff is committed to St. Joseph’s so we wanted to demonstrate our commitment to them for all of the hard work and time they gave to the remote learning program. There is no better feeling than being able to retain everyone on your team when there are economic challenges all around us.”

Daniel S. Roy, Superintendent of Schools for the Diocese of Fall River adds, “The past six months have been like no other time in recent history for all of our schools. How our enrollment and subsequent staffing needs for each school would end up was a top priority throughout the summer. St. Joseph School exemplifies commitment, teamwork, and faith that is so well-known in our Catholic schools.”

“Because I was a pre-school aide last school year, I was initially concerned for my job,” according to Jennifer Sherman, second grade teacher at St. Joseph School. “When I was offered a promotion to be the second grade teacher, I was so excited to continue my teaching career at St. Joseph School. My classroom is full this year so it is wonderful to teach all of these students – mostly in-person, but a few remotely – and bring a bit of ‘normalcy’ back into our lives.”

For more information about St. Joseph's School, please go to www.saintjosephschool.org.

For more information about the Catholic Schools Alliance, please go to <https://www.catholicschoolsalliance.org/we-have-a-place-for-you/>.

About the Catholic Schools Alliance

The Catholic Schools Alliance comprises administrators, teachers, staff, parents and clergy joined in partnership to educate the children of the Diocese of Fall River in Catholic faith and values. Our schools have a demanding educational culture that helps students from across the academic spectrum reach their God-given potential. With an emphasis on service and respect for the dignity of every person, we prepare students to meet the challenges of today's diverse world and become meaningful contributors to society.