



DIOCESE OF COVINGTON
Department of Catholic Schools

November 3, 2021

Dear Parents,

As we begin the month of November, I want to provide an update on the COVID-19 protocols for schools in the Diocese of Covington.

Since the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year, the Diocesan office has tracked all the COVID-19 cases for our 37 schools. This school year we have over 9,700 students enrolled in preschool through the twelfth grade in addition to over 1,500 faculty and staff. Our schools are located across five Kentucky counties including Boone, Campbell, Harrison, Kenton, and Mason.

As shared in previous communications, our office reviews the daily case data reported by the Kentucky Department of Public Health. We also look at national and international case trends. We are able to compare this data to our own COVID-19 data from this school year as well as the 2020-2021 school year. This information has given us great insight to help make decisions moving forward that are best for our students, staff, and schools.

When we started school in August, one of the uncertainties was how the Delta strain of the COVID-19 virus would impact our schools. Due to rising cases and the Labor Day weekend, our schools began a mask requirement Tuesday, September 7th as another way to mitigate possible spread of the virus. We have gathered data over the last eight weeks and a review of that data is included with this letter.

Based on the data that we have collected and reviewed, our schools will use a new model to determine whether or not masks will be required in each school. These new procedures will begin on Monday, November 8th and will be based on the following factors:

Community spread is High (Red Zone) according to the Kentucky Department of Public Health (KDPH).	Masks required for all students, staff, and visitors
A school has 5 or more COVID-19 cases and illness is increasing. (Regardless of community spread status.)	Masks required for all students, staff, and visitors.
Community spread is Moderate (Orange), Substantial (Yellow), or Low (Green) according to the KDPH.	Masks are recommended but not required.

The determination for masks for the upcoming school week will be based on the data released by the Kentucky Department of Public Health on Thursdays. This information can be found at this website: <https://govstatus.egov.com/kycovid19>. If changes need to be made to the masking procedures, the school principal will communicate that information to families allowing time to prepare for the upcoming week.

Based on the current data trends, we expect our counties to remain in the moderate level for community spread. This means that beginning Monday, November 8th masks will be recommended but not required. Although masks may not be required, our schools will continue encouraging the use of masks for those who choose to do so. In order to help create a respectful learning environment, our teachers will discuss these changes with the students this Thursday or Friday. They will teach respect for each individual's decision whether or not to wear a mask and discuss appropriate times to consider wearing a mask.

Beginning Monday, November 8th, we will also offer a test-to-stay alternative to quarantine following a close contact exposure in the school setting. Once a student is deemed a close contact at school, you can choose the 7-day (with a negative test on day 5) or 10-day quarantine options or your child can remain in school by meeting the following requirements:

- Student must have no symptoms;
- Student must wear a mask for 7 days following the close contact exposure;
- Student must get a negative PCR test within 48 hours of the notified exposure and on day 5;
- If the student meets all of these conditions, he/she may remain at school and return to regular procedures on day 8.

At this time, the only changes to our protocols will be the new guidelines to determine masks in schools and the added test-to-stay option to avoid a close-contact quarantine. All our other protocols, including cleaning and recommendations on distancing will remain in place. The updated COVID-19 Return to School Requirements document will be shared later this week.

I would like to thank you for your patience and understanding with these changes and updates. We will continue to track the data and make additional changes when necessary. Ultimately, our goal is to return to normal, in-person instruction so our children can learn in the best environment possible.

Let us pray that the COVID-19 cases continue to decline and for all those who are still suffering during this pandemic.

Sincerely,



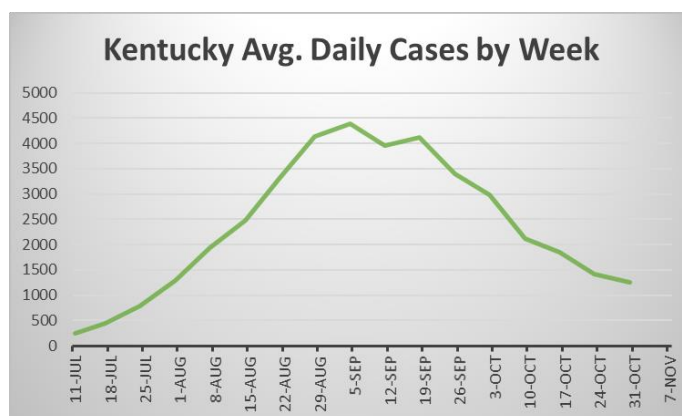
Mrs. Kendra McGuire
Superintendent of Schools

COVID-19 Data Review

Kentucky State-wide Case Data:

(Data from the KY COVID-19 Daily Reports, Kentucky Department of Public Health)

In early July, Kentucky saw a steady increase in COVID-19 case activity. The data below shows the average daily cases by week. The highest week of cases for the state was the week ending Saturday, September 4th. The cases have been steadily declining since that time. In our schools, we saw the highest number of COVID positive cases the week ending August 28th and September 4th with a total 61 and 58 cases respectively.



Kentucky Case Data by County:

(Data from the KY COVID-19 Daily Reports, Kentucky Department of Public Health)

The tables below show each county's average daily cases by month. We have schools located within each of the counties listed. During the 2020-2021 school year, our schools saw the greatest impacts from COVID-19 in November 2020 and January 2021 (schools were closed by Government order in December 2020). During those two months we had to close some schools to in-person instruction due to the large number of students quarantined or staff shortages from quarantines. Despite the closures, we also had many schools with no COVID-19 cases during that time. In September 2021, in all counties except Harrison, case activity did not reach the same levels as January 2021 despite all activities being open.

		Average Daily Cases by Month/County												
		Avg Cases	July	August	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June
2020-2021	Kenton		15.9	14.7	12.1	29.0	85.6	112.3	126.8	71.5	26.8	15.9	17.7	6.4
	Boone		12.9	10.3	10.7	23.2	78.8	95.7	100.1	62.0	23.1	16.7	17.5	6.8
	Campbell		7.7	6.6	6.8	16.5	49.0	55.4	70.1	35.9	13.5	5.9	10.0	3.7
	Harrison		0.9	0.9	1.0	2.9	6.9	8.6	19.3	5.3	3.3	2.2	1.5	3.3
	Mason		0.4	0.9	1.1	2.0	8.9	15.9	9.8	7.4	2.1	4.8	2.4	1.7
2021-2022		Avg Cases	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.								
	Kenton		11.2	60.1	96.9	59.7								
	Boone		13.6	52.0	79.6	51.6								
	Campbell		7.1	31.2	56.3	27.8								
	Harrison		1.9	12.8	23.6	11.1								
Mason		1.5	8.6	10.8	6.0									

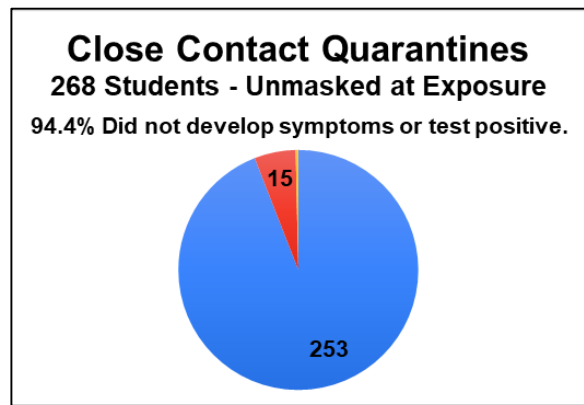
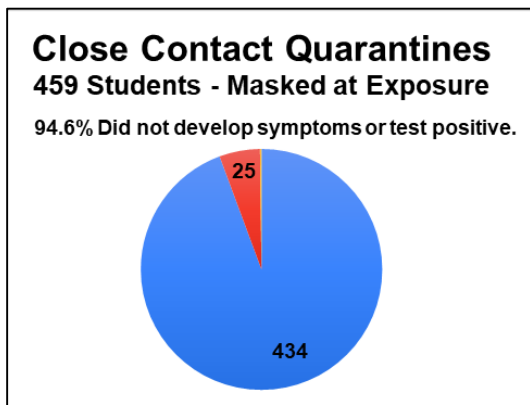
The table below shows each county’s average daily cases by week. The highlighted box shows when cases peaked for each county. The mask requirement for our schools began the week of September 6th.

	Aug	Aug	Aug	Aug-Sept	Sept	Sept	Sept	Sept-Oct	Oct	Oct	Oct	Oct
Weekly Avg	8-15th	16-22nd	23-29th	30-5th	6-12th	13-19th	20-26th	27-3rd	4-10th	11-17th	18-24th	25-31st
Kenton	51.3	62.4	95.0	90.1	94.4	104.3	86.7	100.9	81.4	59.6	43.7	39.7
Boone	47.4	58.6	62.6	75.7	76.7	77.7	81.0	74.6	61.6	54.1	50.1	36.0
Campbell	21.6	32.3	51.6	64.3	64.0	57.0	49.3	34.4	36.1	26.4	28.9	18.6
Harrison	11.1	14.0	23.2	23.9	24.6	25.7	20.9	17.7	12.4	14.7	11.1	4.4
Mason	7.4	13.7	9.2	13.1	7.6	16.0	10.6	5.3	8.0	4.6	6.9	4.9

Diocese of Covington – COVID-19 Quarantine Data Review:

(Data gathered by the Diocese of Covington from August-October 1st)

For our schools, quarantines remain one of the biggest challenges for in-person learning. During the 2020-2021 school year, our anecdotal evidence was clear that the majority of students quarantined from a close contact at school did not end up testing positive for COVID-19. This school year, we tracked the students quarantined due to a close contact in the school setting. The results of this data collection are shown below.



- Students remained healthy throughout their quarantine.
- Students tested positive during their quarantine.

The blue area shows the number of students who never developed symptoms or tested negative for COVID-19. The red area shows the number of students who tested positive during their quarantine period following a close contact in school. According to our data, the likelihood of testing positive from a close contact exposure was uncommon and nearly the same whether students were masked or unmasked.

Since our data demonstrated the majority of students do not test positive for COVID-19 following a close-contact exposure in the school setting, we looked at data from other districts for comparison. We found a few states and districts, with much larger populations, reporting rates near 98%. As a result of this data a few states, including Ohio, have already moved to a symptoms-based quarantine. We are continuing to explore this option for our schools.

Mental Health Review:

Our school principals and counselors have reported a significant increase in the need for mental health services for our students over the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school year. Many students are demonstrating increased anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation. We have found that the forced isolation from quarantines are a significant issue for adolescents. This school year over 30 students in our diocese have been evaluated or hospitalized for suicidal ideation.

Current County Case Activity:

(Data provided by the Northern Kentucky Health Department as of Nov. 1, 2021)

Below is a chart showing the total number of active COVID-19 cases in our northernmost counties.

Active case data from Harrison and Mason counties was not available.

County	Population	Active Cases	% of Population Active
Boone	133581	631	0.5%
Campbell	93584	317	0.3%
Grant	25069	163	0.7%
Kenton	166998	704	0.4%
Total	419232	1815	0.4%

Current Case Activity – Diocese of Covington Schools:

(Data gathered by the Diocese of Covington as of Nov. 1, 2021)

- 33 of 37 schools have no active COVID-19 cases among students or staff.
- There are a total of 4 positive COVID-19 cases, 3 students and 1 staff member, one case each at four different schools.
- During the month of October, on average, 26 schools had no positive cases.

After gathering and reviewing a variety of data points over the last few weeks, many of which have been shared in this letter, our Covid Committee has concluded the following:

- The transmission of COVID-19 in the school setting remains uncommon.
- Children are primarily getting COVID-19 in their homes or from family/social gatherings.
- Children are not spreading COVID-19 to adults in the school setting.
- The majority of children exposed to COVID-19 in the school setting will not develop symptoms or test positive for COVID-19.
- We are not seeing COVID-19 transmission at large events. These have included homecomings, full Masses, sporting events – both indoor and outdoor, festivals, retreats, and overnight trips which were held during this recent rise in cases.

This information is a snapshot of some of the data we have gathered and reviewed to help make decisions on COVID-19 protocols in schools. We will continue to gather and analyze various data points to inform school procedures and promote the health and well-being of all our students and staff.