



DIOCESE OF COVINGTON
Department of Catholic Schools

September 3, 2021

Dear Parents,

As we begin the month of September, I wanted to provide you with a COVID-19 update and inform you of a change to our masking plans.

First, many of our schools have been in session for nearly three weeks or more. During this time we have seen case activity in some schools and have had to quarantine students and staff deemed close contacts. This is to be expected as case activity in our area is high. As stated in our protocols, additional precautions such as masks may be put into place based on case activity. Of our 37 schools, three elementary schools and two middle schools have added masks as a precaution due to increasing case activity in their school. We are appreciative of our families for adjusting to these changes and exhibiting patience as we navigate this school year with a new strain of the virus.

As the holiday weekend approaches, **we have made the decision to move all schools to required masking effective Tuesday, September 7th**. This is based on our experiences last year with COVID-19 cases and the rising case activity in our region. During the 2020-2021 school year, we saw an increase in positive student cases following long weekends or holidays where people often gather. We also know that the higher the community rates, the more impacts we will see in our schools. At this time, by returning to a mask requirement we will hopefully mitigate further spread of the virus and help keep quarantines to a minimum. This is an extra precaution that we feel is necessary in order to maintain in-person instruction for the greatest number of students. Please note that case data and other information is reviewed daily and evaluated weekly.

While there are many sides to the arguments about masks, we are asking families to work with us as we make decisions that we feel are best for our school communities. We review a lot of information from the CDC, the Kentucky Department of Public Health, the local health department, the Governor's office and the Kentucky Department of Education. When available, we review the opinions of other organizations to gather as much information as possible to make these decisions. However, our data is a large driver of our decisions as we have been tracking COVID-19 cases for thousands of students and staff over these last 14 months.

Included with this letter is an update to our "COVID-19 Return to School Requirements" document. I encourage you to read through the document in its entirety as more information has been added. One thing that I would like to point out is the request for families to do a morning health check for their students that includes temperature taking. We are seeing more children experience fevers with COVID-19 this school year and this precaution could help identify when to keep your children home sooner.

The document also has updated information on masks and additional questions and answers to help guide you through COVID-19 symptoms, tests, exposures, and quarantines. Just like last year, we continue to review new guidance and information as it comes out so these protocols are always subject to changes and revisions.

As I'm sure you are aware, there are a wide range of thoughts and opinions on the best response to this pandemic. I have seen a lot of un-Christian words and actions on all sides of this debate. But we cannot allow these differences to divide us. As Catholic school communities, it is important for us to come together and treat one another as Christ taught us. While it seems that we will not be able to come to agreement on one COVID-19 response plan we can unite in prayer through our Lord, Jesus Christ. He is the only one who can help us learn to live in peace with one another despite our differences.

With this in mind, I am asking our school families to pray a weekly rosary for peace and safety in our school communities. This can be done once per week in your households, maybe a Sunday evening for the upcoming week. It would also be great to see our school parents joining together to pray the rosary too.

We know that through faith and trust in God we will be strengthened for this journey. Let's be a light to those around us and show others the power God has to transform us and bring good out of the most difficult circumstances. We only need to look to the cross to be reminded of this.

I would also ask that you are kind to our principals, faculty, and staff. They have chosen this vocation because of their love of children and learning. Let's make sure they can focus their efforts on the children and ensure they can dedicate their time to providing a great Catholic education to the students. As we enter the third school year impacted by the pandemic, we want our children to have a learning experience that is as close to normal as we can safely provide. Keeping our adult disagreements out of their lives, classrooms, and schools will help us reach that goal.

I want to thank you for your patience, understanding, and flexibility during these difficult times. There were ups and downs and uncertainties last school year but we got through it together. We are confident and hopeful that this year will be even better but it will take a little time to find the right balance.

Sincerely,



Mrs. Kendra McGuire
Superintendent of Schools