

DIOCESE OF ALLENTOWN
SECRETARIAT OF EVANGELIZATION, EDUCATION & FORMATION
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February 2, 2022

Dear Diocesan Educational Community,

Let me take the opportunity to wish each of you a *Happy Catholic Schools Week* and thank you for your commitment to and support of Catholic education in the Diocese of Allentown. We have much to be proud of within our Catholic schools. Our schools offer a quality academic curriculum, commendable test scores, high percentages of students who go on to college, service opportunities, safe and family environments, and a variety of programs that enhance the student experience. Most importantly, we teach Catholic beliefs and values that provide for the growth of our students, not only as scholars, but as people of faith. This atmosphere creates centers of academic excellence where our Catholic faith is taught, experienced, and lived daily.

I also wanted to provide an update for you regarding our COVID-19 Health and Safety Plans and mitigation strategies. With the cooperation and collective efforts of each of you, we have been able to keep our students in school for in-person instruction, limit the number of quarantines, and keep our students and staff safe.

In my letter to our school communities on January 3, 2022, I communicated we would re-evaluate the mask policy again the week of February 7, 2022. At the beginning of January, our schools saw a high numbers of students and staff testing positive for COVID-19 and needing to isolate and a number of students and staff needing to quarantine. Thankfully, we have recently seen a significant decline in isolation and quarantine numbers and will be amending our COVID-19 mitigation strategies.

On February 8, 2022, all Diocesan schools will transition to a mask-recommended policy for all students, faculty, staff, and visitors in our schools. Other COVID-19 mitigation measures will remain in place such as social distancing, enhanced cleaning and disinfecting, handwashing, isolation, and quarantine protocols when needed, and contact tracing.

Diocesan schools will continue to follow our Health and Safety Plans regarding Isolation and Quarantine protocols. These protocols align with the most recent guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the direction from the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH).

While masks will be recommended in our schools beginning February 8th, it's important to keep in mind that there are several situations where individuals will still be mandated to wear a mask in school.

- Individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 may return after 5 days of isolation given that they are fever free for 24 hours and their other symptoms are improving. Individuals must wear a mask for Days 6-10 upon their return.

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- Also, for individuals who were exposed to COVID-19 and are in a category that would need to quarantine, the quarantine period is now five (5) days and may return on Day 6 if there are no symptoms. Individuals who are returning from quarantine also must wear a mask for Days 6-10 upon their return.
- While individuals who were identified as a close contact and are fully vaccinated / boosted -OR- had a lab confirmed COVID-19 case in the last 90 days do not have to quarantine, he/she must wear a mask at school through Day 10.
- Public (district) transportation still requires that all students wear a mask as part of a federal mandate.
- The Diocese cannot control the decisions of other governmental agencies, including decisions made by the local Intermediate Units. Masks may be required by certain Intermediate Units when receiving support services.

Please prepare your child for this change in the masking policy and be sure that your child understands your expectations. Also, as we move to a mask optional policy, please respect the decision of others on this issue. Our schools will be monitoring the wearing of masks when mandated, but will not be able to enforce students wearing masks per parental request.

As always, the health and safety of our students and staff continues to be a priority and our mitigation strategies will continue to be reviewed regularly. If the situation changes and compromises our ability to keep our schools both safe and open, we will revise our Health and Safety plans.

Happy Catholic Schools Week!

Sincerely,



Philip J. Fromuth, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Catholic Education