



ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON

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August 2021

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We hope this letter finds you well and that you and your family are excited for the upcoming school year. The way we envisioned this joyous day has changed in the last month. As the Delta variant has quickly spread throughout the country and in the Washington DC Metro area, we have worked with our partners and school leaders to incorporate strategies to allow our students to return to school, in person, five days per week. We will continue to monitor protocols and keep you informed throughout the school year.

Due to the rise of COVID-19 cases both locally and across the country, including the increasing number of cases from the Delta variant breakthrough cases in the fully vaccinated, we must require that **all** adults and children wear masks inside **all** Archdiocese of Washington (ADW) school buildings, regardless of vaccination status, until further notice. This is certainly disappointing, but it is an important strategy to keep students and staff safe. Our decision is based upon the prevailing guidance from health experts, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), state and local health officials, and our consulting experts, all of which have recommended universal indoor masking in schools, regardless of vaccination status. Our mask protocols are listed below:

- Universal masking indoors for everyone age 2 and over, regardless of vaccination status
- Masks are not required outdoors
- Masks will not be worn while actively eating or drinking
 - Eating lunch outdoors is encouraged whenever possible
 - Keeping a distance of 6 feet apart is recommended when eating indoors
 - If 6 feet cannot be maintained, the greatest distance possible will be maintained with a minimum of 3 feet
 - Schools will consider other spaces for lunch to create distance (outdoors, cafeteria, vacant classrooms, hallways) or stagger lunch times so other spaces can be utilized
- Ventilation will be increased throughout school buildings as much as possible

We are happy to report that the vast majority of our teachers and staff are fully vaccinated, and our school staff are vaccinated at a higher rate than the general population in Maryland and the District. We encourage everyone in our school communities to consider COVID-19 vaccines as a way of protecting yourselves and others. Please reach out to your health care provider to discuss a vaccine for your children as they become eligible. Please also know that our schools will continue to work closely with local health departments in the event of a COVID exposure, and our schools will continue to follow health department guidance and directives for quarantine and isolation. Our schools will also continue to communicate with you in a timely manner.

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Last year, as we approached summer, we anticipated fewer restrictions. It is tempting to meet these protocols with disappointment and frustration, but we must look ahead and remain optimistic. God has once again given us the gift of a new school year. It's another opportunity to serve His children and bring them closer to Christ. Let us celebrate this gift with joy. Let us give thanks and praise to our almighty God. Onward Together in Faith!

Prayerfully,



Kelly Branaman
Secretary for Catholic Schools
Superintendent of Schools

Attachment (1):

Parent Safety Sheet