



THE DIOCESE OF COLUMBUS

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September 10, 2021

Dear Families,

Since the pandemic began, we have all shared as our highest priority keeping our children in school and learning 5-days a week in the safest possible conditions. We have consistently stated that we will monitor the rapidly changing Covid situation and modify our protocols as needed.

While we have not seen a large number of Covid cases in high schools, we have seen the impact of the quarantine regulations set by the Ohio Department of Health and interpreted and enforced by Columbus Public Health and Franklin County Public Health. While quarantining is an effective strategy for decreasing the spread of Covid, it is disruptive to our students' education and can make it difficult to maintain in-building instruction. Regardless of vaccination status, masks eliminate the need to quarantine from any in school exposure as long as distancing is maintained and an individual is asymptomatic.

To utilize the modified quarantine protocols that will lessen quarantine numbers and to bring our schools into voluntary alignment with the new orders from the City of Columbus, the Catholic high schools in Franklin County – Bishop Hartley, Bishop Ready, Bishop Watterson, St. Francis DeSales, and St. Charles – will be requiring the wearing of face masks when indoors for all individuals in the school, vaccinated and unvaccinated, beginning on Monday, September 13.

This temporary addition to our Covid protocols will be re-evaluated weekly based on a number of factors, including data published by the Ohio Department of Health. One of the primary markers for lifting this requirement will be when the county transmission rate falls below 100 per 100,000. We will also look at other factors such as hospitalizations and the overall trend of illness and quarantine in the schools.

We know the strength of opinion on masking on both sides of what has become an intense debate. We have heard from many of you and respect and understand your feelings. We ask you please to understand that this decision is temporary and rooted in a concern for the safety of our children and a sincere desire to keep our students present in the classroom every day. Ultimately, we want to leave this decision to parents, but we have an obligation to respond to the current spike in case numbers. If requiring a mask for a short period of time means that we will prevent a serious illness, it is the right action to take. We believe that taking these proactive steps now will avoid the need to take reactive measures later.

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As Catholic communities, our schools must strive to protect the needs and the dignity of all individuals as well as to live our call to love one another, to protect the vulnerable, and be supportive of the common good of those in our communities.

Thank you for understanding.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Adam J. Dufault  
Superintendent of Catholic Schools  
Diocese of Columbus