



*Office for Catholic Schools*  
*Diocese of Scranton*

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February 17, 2022

Catholic School Families,

As we continue to work through the pandemic, we regularly assess our health and safety protocols relative to prevailing guidance and apply it locally in a data-informed approach. Our approach, combined with the collective efforts of our parents, faculty, staff and administrators, has provided our students with the most in-person instruction, minimized the number of quarantines, and mitigated spread of COVID-19 within our buildings.

Nationally and locally, conversations are returning to the loosening of mitigation measures, which is a positive sign that transmission of this virus is waning. Thankfully, the data is showing that the spike in cases across the country, state, and our schools following the Christmas holiday has been declining. While more transmissible and still putting additional strain on our healthcare system, the Omicron variant has also been less severe in terms of health risk. In addition, vaccines are accessible to almost every age group. We continue to strongly encourage vaccines and boosters for all those who are eligible as a public health measure.

Given the recent data trends and anticipating they continue to decline, we are confident we can move towards a "Mask Recommended" policy under either of the two following scenarios, whichever occurs first. During these times, all other mitigation strategies will remain in place.

**Scenario 1:** Masks will be recommended, not required, if a county were to move to a low or moderate transmission category consistently over a one week period. The transition will be made the week following the category change, and the effective date will be communicated by the Catholic Schools Office. We previously allowed for this transition in low, and we are now confident the change can be safely done when a county's transmission is at a moderate level.

**Scenario 2:** Regardless of the transmission level, masks will be recommended, not required, effective Monday, March 14. The rationale for using this date is it will provide a few weeks to monitor the data trends in the external and internal environments and allow for a transition even if the transmission category remains in substantial or high. This date would only be revisited if another surge were to occur.

After schools transition to masks being recommended, there will still be times when a student will be required to wear a mask. Those include:

- An individual who is identified as a close contact to a COVID case, but does not have to quarantine because she/he is either fully vaccinated or had a lab confirmed case of COVID in the last 90 days. She/he must wear a mask in school for 10 days after the last contact with the COVID case.
- Individuals who were exposed to COVID-19 and must quarantine at home will also be required to wear a mask for days 6-10 upon their return to school.
- If an individual tests positive for COVID and is able to return earlier to school than the 10 day isolation as a result of a negative antigen test, this individual must wear a mask for days 6-10 upon their return.
- Transportation provided by a school district still requires that all students wear a mask as part of the Federal mandate.

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*Our Mission - to inspire faith, learning and service*

*Our Vision - to promote responsible leadership in our Church and our world*

It is important to be aware of a few factors when we transition to a "Mask Recommended" policy. At any time after the transition, we may return to a mask requirement if there is a spike in cases in the community or in our schools. Once universal masking no longer exists in our schools, the number of individuals that may be required to quarantine at home may increase. If the number of cases or exposure increases to a level where it is necessary to transition to virtual learning, we will do so.

Please discuss with your child your expectations for masking at school for the time when a transition occurs. Also, as caring and compassionate communities in which we model kindness, the decision of each family regarding this issue is to be respected.

Finally, the health and safety of everyone involved in our school communities continue to be a priority. Therefore, we will monitor the effectiveness of our strategies daily, and be prepared to make any changes necessary.

As always, thank you for your support and commitment to Catholic education in our Diocese.

Our prayer is that you continue to stay healthy and safe during these times and that better days lie ahead.

Sincerely,



Jason Morrison  
Secretary of Catholic Education/CEO



Kristen Donohue  
Superintendent of Catholic Schools