



The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington

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Dear Parents and Guardians,

Welcome back to the second semester! I hope everyone had a relaxing and joyful Christmas holiday, shared with family and friends. As we approach *Catholic Schools Week 2022* at the end of the month, I wanted to take a moment today to thank you for allowing us to be your partners in the education and formation of your children. We appreciate and are humbled by the trust you have placed in our Catholic school communities. Though we have faced multiple challenges over the past two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic, thanks to the hard work and dedication of our administrators, faculty and staff, our students have been able to excel in the areas of Faith, Excellence and Service, which is also our theme for Catholic Schools Week.

I invite you to see the many highlights about our schools in the **Catholic Standard** that will be published, both in print and online, towards the end of the month. I also ask that you consider showing your appreciation to our school leaders, teachers and staff during Catholic Schools Week.

New Isolation and Quarantine Guidance for Catholic Schools

Earlier this month, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) updated [isolation and quarantine guidance](#) for those who test positive for or who are exposed to someone with the COVID-19 virus. The recommended time to isolate or quarantine was reduced to 5 days. However, there are conditions that must be met: Any person who tests positive, must at a minimum, stay home for at least 5 days. People who are exposed, may or may not have to quarantine based on their vaccination status. In addition, protocols were established for 5 days after returning which includes a [well-fitting mask](#). Masks have been an important mitigation strategy throughout the pandemic. A well-fitting mask fits snugly against your face and has layers to keep respiratory droplets in and others out. With a quality mask and continued distancing, students are able to safely continue to attend school for in-person learning. In addition, protocols were established for 5 days after returning which includes a well-fitting mask. The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington Catholic Schools will continue to use masking as one of the safety protocols that allow our schools to remain open and safe for in-person instruction.

The Catholic Schools Office (CSO) has worked diligently to obtain guidance for each jurisdiction. In some cases, this has been a challenge based on the release of documents. Thank you for your patience as we navigated through this, with the best information available at the time. For the most part, local health departments have now adopted these changes, but a few provided additional protocols. Childcare and prekindergarten programs in several jurisdictions have not adopted a reduced isolation and quarantine period, but remain with either previous guidance or endorsed a 10-day period, out of school. With increased transmission rates in certain areas and because this age group does not have access to a vaccine, more restrictive measures are in place. The CSO has created matrices for each jurisdiction as a guide for school leaders.

**It should be noted that individual guidance on isolation and quarantine for a particular outbreak could differ, based on local health department directives or at the discretion of your local school leadership in consultation with local school advisory boards.*

School Staff and Student Vaccination

The leadership of the Archdiocese continues to encourage individuals to receive the COVID-19 vaccination. The mayor of the District of Columbia passed [Mayor's Order 2021-109](#) which went into effect in November, 2021. This order requires adults who are regularly in the school, and student athletes to be fully vaccinated. In December, the City Council of the District of Columbia approved the student COVID-19 vaccination mandate to be enforced in the 2022-2023 school year. We also anticipate the State of Maryland will mandate student vaccines in the approaching 2022-2023 school year.

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington has an existing policy regarding student immunizations. While we encourage student immunizations, parents are afforded a procedure under policy to obtain a waiver/exemption from vaccination for medical reasons and/or serious moral objections. Policy 3514, updated in 2017, states,

“All students in the Archdiocesan Catholic schools shall be immunized in accordance with the immunization requirements and the guidelines of The Archdiocese of Washington, because Catholic moral teaching urges parents/guardians to immunize their children against serious infectious diseases given the grave risk of non-vaccination to other children, pregnant women, and the population as a whole. Exemptions are provided on a temporary basis to those applicants with a physician-documented medical reason. The Archdiocese of Washington will also consider exemptions based on the assertion of a serious moral objection as a matter of conscience to certain vaccines.”

Leadership in The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington will be working this month to establish any procedural updates for families to request and obtain vaccine waivers/exemptions. While the procedures are not yet complete at this time, we felt it important to remind the community of our existing policy and intention to maintain the practice with the COVID 19 vaccine mandates in the approaching school year.

As we continue to navigate the shifts and challenges of the pandemic, we will keep you informed and updated on changes and developments. Please be assured of our continued prayers for the safety and health of your families and our parish and school communities. Again, thank you very much for your support and for helping our schools to remain places of Faith, Excellence and Service!

In Christ,



Kelly Branaman
Secretary for Catholic Schools
Superintendent of Schools