



DIOCESE OF COLORADO SPRINGS

OFFICE OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

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Dear Parents/Guardians,

“I urge you to live with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of spirit through the bond of peace.” Ephesians 4: 1-3

One of the core values of a Catholic school is that we are a community of faith. This requires that we work together as a family, to preserve the bond of peace. The Church’s clear teaching affirms that parents are the first educators of their children. While respecting this right of parents, there are times when we must make decisions that consider the good of the community. Especially in our schools, we must balance the safety of the whole community with the individual rights of parents to make decisions for their children. We must also cooperate with civil authorities and their efforts to safeguard the health and well-being of its citizens. These two positions can stand together if we remember that the safety of our community is most important.

Our protocol for returning to in-person learning this year is based on our school and county data from the last 18 months. Last year, our families increased monitoring of personal health and children stayed home if he/she was sick or exposed to an individual who was sick. Schools added air filtration systems, increased cleaning and sanitizing and instituted cohorting to provide protection for our students and staff. Also, following the state mandate, our masking requirement was for all individuals 12 years and older inside the school. This year, our new world includes the Delta variant which, because it is new, we do not have specific data regarding spread in the school environment. The communications at the Diocesan and the school level illustrate the split in our community over appropriate measures for protections. We are not going to reach consensus on the perfect way to respond but will follow the data to make the best decisions for our school communities.

Our mitigation strategies are similar to those from last year. As a Dioceses, we will follow legally-binding mask mandates when they are instituted by our state governmental authorities. At this point, we are strongly recommending mask wearing as a mitigation strategy. We are monitoring the daily incidence and hospitalization numbers released by Douglas County and El Paso County Department of Health. Our county data demonstrates that children are testing positive for COVID but these same children are not being hospitalized from COVID. Again, our plan will change if the data demonstrates a need to change. We are also monitoring individual school data. Again, this plan is fluid and could change if the data changes.

I want to recognize the dedication and tireless work by our school principals. They are working countless hours to ensure that our students grow spiritually, academically, socially, emotionally, and physically this year. I am praying that our school communities will support the leadership and look for ways to build positive communication between all groups. I am also praying that we remember that our children are watching us. We are modeling how to address conflict in our communities and our actions speak more than our words.

Yours in Christ,

Sheila Whalen, Superintendent of Catholic Schools

Incidence and Hospitalizations

