



August 6, 2021

Dear Diocese of Monterey Catholic School Communities,

I pray that this letter finds you well. I would like to update you on our plans as we welcome back students for the 2021-2022 school year.

Updated K-12 Guidance

Last month, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) released updated requirements for K-12 schools reflecting recent updates from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/K-12-Guidance-2021-22-School-Year.aspx>

There are several elements of the new rules that will directly benefit our students. The CDPH has eliminated the need for physical distancing and cohort scheduling. The elimination of these restrictions will allow us to continue to provide full-time in-person instruction for every student enrolled in our Catholic schools.

The CDPH has also created new options that will reduce, and in some cases eliminate, absences required for quarantine following a close contact with someone who has COVID-19. This will allow us to avoid sending entire classes home for quarantine in some circumstances. Please see the link above for a description of how modified quarantine works and when it is applicable.

There are some elements of last year's rules that remain in place this year.

Required Use of Face Coverings

The State of California has issued the following requirements:

- All students age 2 and older are required to mask indoors.
- Adults in all school settings are required to mask when sharing indoor spaces with students, regardless of vaccination status.
- Masks are optional outdoors for all students and staff in school settings, regardless of vaccination status.

County health officials have confirmed that all school districts and private schools must comply with the guidance for schools included in the State Public Health Officer Order of June 11, 2021.

We understand that some may consider the face covering requirement unnecessary, while others may believe the guidance does not go far enough. Some media reports have implied that districts and schools have the discretion to make face coverings optional. This is not the case. We are

required to enforce this mandate, as we would with any law, regulation, or policy. Locations may exact stricter standards, but not lesser ones. Our adherence to these same public safety measures allowed us a successful return to Catholic school campuses last year. The current mask requirement is supported by the American Academy of Pediatrics:

<https://www.aappublications.org/news/2021/07/18/schools-071821>.

The Diocese of Monterey remains committed to following this required public health guidance, and for this reason, students, faculty, and staff in every one of our schools are required to wear masks while indoors as we start the school year.

COVID-19 Vaccinations

At this time, neither the State of California nor the Diocese of Monterey is requiring the COVID-19 vaccine as a condition of enrollment or employment. However, receiving the COVID-19 vaccine is one of the layers of mitigation that will help us maintain a healthy school environment. I encourage you to meet with your or your child's primary care physician to learn more about the COVID-19 vaccine. Receiving the COVID-19 vaccine is highly encouraged by the Diocese of Monterey other than for those medically exempted.

Moving Forward

The Department of Catholic Schools and your school's administration will continue to monitor our state's guidance and will keep you posted on any changes that impact Catholic school operations.

The past 17 months have been challenging in different ways for everyone. Whether you are feeling overwhelmed by changes, excited for the future, frustrated from the challenges, trying to process loss, or a combination of all these things, we want to acknowledge your role in making it through a historic school year. Our Catholic school communities and staff members supported each other, went above and beyond to learn new ways of doing things, and did everything possible to create a healthy and nurturing environment for our students.

Thank you for your continued patience, partnership, and understanding. May you be filled with the love of God and the peace of Christ as we begin a new school year together.

Blessings,



Kimberly Cheng
Superintendent of Schools

*Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving,
make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all
understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*

Philippians 4:6-7