



DR. SAMUEL TORRES
Superintendent

**MARIBEL ARGUELLES-
ORTIZ**
Associate Superintendent

DR. AUSTIN CONLEY III
Director of Advancement

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Dear Catholic School Families,

With the close of the 2020-2021 school year, and with summer midway through, we'd like to update you on changes to state guidance for our Catholic schools as we approach 2021-2022.

Last week, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) released updated guidance for K-12 schools reflecting recent updates from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). There are several elements of the guidance that will directly benefit our students. The two most restrictive prevention measures that were included in last year's guidance are no longer required: physical distancing and cohort scheduling. The elimination of these measures 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 full classrooms of students home for quarantine.

With the elimination of these requirements, the CDPH is relying on a multi-layered prevention strategy approach, including continued face covering guidance and robust testing programs provided free by the state.

We understand that many of you 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 have the discretion to make face coverings optional, which is not accurate.

The State of California has issued the following requirements:

- All K-12 students are required to mask indoors.
- Adults in K-12 school settings are required to mask when sharing indoor spaces with students.
- Masks are *optional outdoors* for all in K-12 school settings.
- Consistent with guidance from the 2020-21 school year, schools must develop and implement local protocols to enforce the mask requirements.

County health officials have confirmed that all school districts must comply with the guidance for schools included in the State Public Health Officer Order of June 11, 2021, which derives its authority from Health and Safety Codes 120125, 120140,

◆ 201 East Highland Avenue, San Bernardino, California 92404 ◆

Telephone (909) 475-5437 ◆ Fax (909) 475-5477 ◆ Email: catholicschools@sbdioocese.org

120175,120195 and 131080 and other applicable laws. As a public entity, the San Bernardino County and Riverside County public health orders includes a similar requirement.

The state has not given school districts or schools the discretion to make face coverings optional, or to create their own standard for enforcement. We are required to enforce this mandate, as we would with any law, regulation, or policy. Locations may exact stricter standards, but not less. 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.

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

The Office 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're excited for the future, feeling overwhelmed by changes, 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 an historic school year. Our Catholic school communities and staff members supported each other, went far above and beyond to learn new ways of doing things, and did everything possible to take care of our students and families. We did it together.

Thank you for your continued patience and understanding. May our faithful God shine warmly on you and your families this summer.

God Bless,



Dr. Samuel Torres

Superintendent

Office of Catholic Schools
2021 - 2022 School Guidelines
CHANGES FROM 2020 -2021 PROTOCOL

In accordance with the CDC and CDPH, the goal of the Diocese of San Bernardino is for students and staff to safely be on campus, and for students to experience instructional practices that align with 21st century pedagogy. The return to campus in the Spring of 2021 came with the presence of social distancing and barriers between students to increase the safety of everyone in the classroom. Recent evidence indicates that in-person instruction can occur safely without minimum physical distancing requirements when other mitigation strategies (e.g., masking) are fully implemented (CDC; CDPH). Therefore, physical distancing and barriers will not be required moving forward.

Face Coverings

Masks are one of the most effective and simplest safety mitigation layers to prevent in-school transmission of COVID-19 infections and to support full time in-person instruction in K-12 schools (CDC; CDPH). Masks best promote both safety and in-person learning by reducing the need for physical distancing (CDC; CDPH). Therefore, masks will be required for all those who are 2-years-old and older, when indoors.

Exceptions:

- When outdoors for class, recess, lunch or outdoor activities that are not crowded.
- Persons exempted from wearing a face covering due to a medical condition, must wear a non-restrictive alternative, such as a face shield with a drape on the bottom edge, as long as their condition permits it.
- In limited situations where a face covering cannot be used for pedagogical or developmental reasons, a face shield with a drape (per CDPH guidelines) can be used instead of a face covering while in the classroom as long as the wearer maintains physical distance from others.

Screening

Screening should be done at home, provided that parents and employees have access to COVID-19 symptom information. Students and employees should stay home if they are ill.

Quarantine Requirements

If an employee or student is exposed to someone that has tested positive for COVID-19, they will self-quarantine at home for 10 days, if unvaccinated, or 7 days if vaccinated. They must be free of symptoms for 24 hours without medication before returning.

If an employee or student tests positive for COVID-19, they will self-quarantine at home for 10 days if unvaccinated, or 7 days if vaccinated. Further, if any family member is an employee or student within the Diocese of San Bernardino, they too quarantine as indicated. They must be free of symptoms for 24 hours without medication before returning. With all students and employees masked indoors, there is no self-quarantine requirement for the entire class due to a positive COVID-19 case within the class.

All exposures and positive cases must be reported to OCS and the county's health department.

** Due to HIPAA, we cannot directly ask employees of their vaccination status. They may volunteer that information and verification to reduce their quarantine time.

Continued school protocol from previous guidelines:

- Face covering hygiene and proper wear
- Ventilation
- Handwashing etiquette
- Contact tracing
- Cleaning and disinfecting

Resources

CDC

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html#print>

California Department of Public Health

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Guidance-on-Isolation-and-Quarantine-for-COVID-19-Contact-Tracing.aspx>

COVID-19 Symptoms

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>

American Academy of Pediatrics

<https://services.aap.org/en/news-room/news-releases/aap/2021/american-academy-of-pediatrics-updates-recommendations-for-opening-schools-in-fall-2021/>