

# COVID-19 GUIDANCE

## CATHOLIC SCHOOLS | DIOCESE OF SALINA

This document is intended to be used as a reference. Each school in our diocese is unique and will use this to navigate the evolving health crisis in their community and make the best decisions for their students and staff.

### PREVENTION STRATEGIES

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recommended these layered prevention strategies as critical in the protection of students, teachers, staff, and administrators in our schools. These strategies include:

- Vaccination
- Consistent and correct mask use
- Social & physical distancing
- Screening & testing to promptly identify cases, clusters, and outbreaks
- Ventilation
- Hand washing and respiratory etiquette
- Staying home when sick and getting tested
- Contact tracing, in combination with isolation and quarantine
- Cleaning and disinfection

### WEARING OF MASKS

The CDC has released guidance in K-12 schools and recommends that masks should be worn indoors by all individuals vaccinated or not vaccinated. The Catholic Diocese of Salina Education Office advises parents and guardians to carefully review and consider the CDC and KDHE guidance when making decisions about the health and safety of their children.

The Office of Education has consulted the Office of the Bishop and has received approval to publish the following for all Catholic schools in the Diocese of Salina for 2021-2022:

#### School staff:

- The decision to wear a mask is at the discretion of the individual staff member.

#### Students:

- The decision to wear a mask is at the discretion of the parents/guardians of the student.

# WEARING OF MASKS CONTINUED

The situation will be monitored by school officials. We ask for flexibility and cooperation as we try to do what is best for our schools.

There are many strong opinions on mask mitigation. As our schools are institutions of the Catholic Church, we would ask that our employees, students, and families please be respectful of those who have differing opinions and who make different decisions than our own.

# SAFETY PROTOCOLS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Office of Education will continue to dialogue with our Catholic school administrators regarding any increases in COVID-19 positivity rates within our school's community. In consultation with local public health department officials and the Office of Education, changes in key prevention strategies for any of our Catholic schools must be approved by the diocesan Superintendent of Schools before being shared with the school's community.

In cases of positive COVID-19 tests or exposure to such individuals, employees and students will quarantine following CDC guidelines and their local public health department's directives. Each school's administration will provide information on how students will receive academic instruction at home if a student is COVID-19 positive or has been exposed and not vaccinated against COVID-19.

# VACCINATIONS

COVID-19 vaccinations are distinct from other vaccines required at specified grade levels for school enrollment. Therefore, it will be a family decision on whether or not their children will be vaccinated. The Catholic school may gather information from employees and students as to their vaccination status; however, medical information is private and is protected by law. Public identification of those who are or are not vaccinated against COVID-19 will not be permitted.

Furthermore, vaccination status against COVID-19 may not be a basis for unequal treatment. No action will be taken against, or required of, an individual employee or child if that action could potentially identify vaccination status.

An exception would be if there is an outbreak within the school in which quarantining and safety decisions must be implemented to protect those who are unvaccinated. In such cases, every precaution will be made to not publicly identify those who are unvaccinated, nor will there be any stigma or discrimination allowed against any unvaccinated person. Vaccination status may not be a requirement to attend any school event or to be a member of any school organization.

# REMOTE LEARNING

Remote learning will not be offered as an alternative to in-class instruction in our diocesan schools for the 2021-2022 school year. Exceptions would be: 1) if positivity rates are at such a level that an individual classroom or an entire school must close as a mitigation strategy; or, 2) if a student is deemed “medically fragile.” In regard to the latter, a parent or guardian may petition the school with professional documentation from a licensed physician that supports a child’s “medically fragile” status. At that point, it will then become a site-based decision of the pastor/chaplain and principal to provide a remote-learning option based upon the school’s resources to reasonably accommodate such a request.

It is also important to note that remote learning could possibly not be in the same format as in the 2020-2021 school year. It will, most likely, be a combination of live streaming, recorded lessons, and assigned tasks.

## NEW SCHOOL YEAR

In gratitude, the Office of Education joins our 15 elementary and secondary Catholic school communities in looking forward to the return of regularly-scheduled instructional days for 2021-2022. Catholic education is vital to the evangelizing mission of the Church. Let us continue to pray and to seek the wisdom of the Holy Spirit as we teach the children entrusted to our care.

To God be the glory.

Bishop Gerald Vincke



Geoff Andrews, Superintendent of Catholic Schools



# KEEP OUR CLASSROOM HEALTHY



If you feel sick, stay home  
and talk to your doctor

Wash your hands with soap  
and water for 20 seconds.



Respect those who  
choose to wear a mask

Try to distance from  
others when possible

