



Office of the Archbishop

Archdiocese of Mobile

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

Last school year was the most unusual year the people of the Archdiocese have faced! We should all be proud that the students in our Catholic schools did not miss out on an education last year despite the challenges brought on by COVID-19. Those who serve in our schools faced the daunting tasks of educating in these uncharted times. They have been outstanding and our students have been blessed by their efforts.

Thank you to all the families who place their trust in our Catholic schools, often at great sacrifice. Thank you for your cooperation and support in overcoming the challenges of the 2020-2021 school year. I pray God blesses each of you. We look forward to welcoming students back to our campuses on August 18th, while continuing to provide a safe and healthy academic environment to the children you entrust to our care.

Throughout the summer, we have been monitoring the recommendations set forth by health organizations and medical professionals to prepare for the beginning of the upcoming school year. Unfortunately, as a result of the new COVID-19 variant, many areas in our Archdiocese and throughout the nation are experiencing an increase in cases of COVID-19. Based on this and the recommendations of the CDC, the following will be implemented for grades 7-12 to begin the upcoming 2021-22 school year:

- Fully vaccinated students do not need to wear masks or physically distance from others.
- It is recommended that those who are not fully vaccinated wear masks while inside the school and maintain a 3-foot distance from others. When feasible, each school will provide areas to allow those who are not fully vaccinated space for the 3-foot physical distancing.
- Schools will not require proof of vaccination, monitor the wearing of masks or conduct contact tracing for this age group. It is parental responsibility to assure that the student complies with CDC recommendations.

The low vaccination rates and the increasing numbers of diagnosed cases of COVID-19 within our communities are a definite concern for the vulnerable students in grades K-6 who do not have a vaccine available to them. Due to the increasing numbers of diagnosed cases, it is most prudent to wait for the Alabama Department of Public Health guidance before developing

protocols for students in kindergarten through 6th grade. The projected release date for this guidance is the beginning of August.

Preschool will follow the same hygiene and sanitization protocols as last year. Masks will be optional, not required.

As parents, the ultimate decision for having your child vaccinated is yours. At the same time, I cannot more strongly urge families to be vaccinated. Please speak with your physician about this. Scientific research continues to indicate that people who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 are at low risk of symptomatic or severe infection and are less likely to have an asymptomatic infection or transmit COVID-19 to others. If your child is not vaccinated, please stress the importance of wearing a mask. Wearing a mask and maintaining the 3-foot distance comes with an additional benefit. Like those who are fully vaccinated, they do not have to quarantine if exposed to a person who tests positive.

The above protocols were developed in consultation with the Office of Catholic Schools and with unanimous approval by our Principals. The Archdiocese of Mobile will continue to monitor the pandemic and revise our protocols as needed throughout the 2021-22 school year. Additional mitigation protocols will be conveyed to you from your school's Principal.

Trusting in God, we look forward to carrying on the centuries-old ministry of Catholic schools. They are needed now more than ever. May God bless each of you and may God bless our schools.

Sincerely in the Lord,

+ *Thomas J. Rodi*

Most Reverend Thomas J. Rodi
Archbishop of Mobile