



**OFFICE OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**  
**MEMORANDUM**  
**August 20, 2021**

Dear Parents and Guardians,

As I indicated in my letter of August 17<sup>th</sup>, we would likely need to consider additional COVID-19 mitigation strategies. Sadly, in just the last few days, the number of students and teachers who have had to quarantine has risen dramatically, and in some cases, whole classes have had to stay home due to exposure. Tragically, this week, one of our beloved school staff members died from COVID-19. These are truly challenging times that demand challenging solutions.

During the last week I have received guidance and advice from various medical professionals who have strongly encouraged that we follow the guidance from the American Academy of Pediatrics and the CDC in the following procedures in a multi-layered approach:

- Practice social distancing to the extent possible (at least 3 feet)
- Good hygiene, including regular hand washing
- Wear a mask indoors, whether vaccinated or not, for all individuals ages 2 and up
- All those eligible should be fully vaccinated for COVID-19

Effective Monday, August 23, 2021, all schools operated by the Diocese of Palm Beach will require every person to wear a mask while indoors on all of our campuses and while on school transportation. Students and teachers will not be required to wear masks outdoors if they can practice proper social distancing.<sup>1</sup>

This mask mandate is effective for the next 60 days and will be reviewed at that time, and every 30 days thereafter, to determine if it should be continued or revised. I understand that some families believe that masks are detrimental to your child, and you may be opposed to these requirements. However, given the current spread of the virus in our community, families will have to comply with these guidelines or consider other educational options for your child.

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<sup>1</sup> A medical accommodation may be available depending on the particular facts and circumstances. Parents seeking a medical accommodation will be required to provide a letter certifying the particular medical disability at issue and the reason why the disability precludes the child from wearing a facial covering of any kind. The letter must be issued by a medical doctor licensed under Chapter 458 or an osteopathic physician licensed under Chapter 459. The letter should be submitted to your school administrator for further review and evaluation by diocesan medical advisors in accordance with CDC and AAP guidelines. The specific accommodations that are ultimately made available to the student will vary depending on the particular circumstances and may include temporary measures such as modifications to the child's learning environment or hybrid instruction.

This policy is the product of careful consideration and deliberation by the Diocese of Palm Beach after consultation with medical professionals as to what furthers the public good in the governance and administration of our Diocesan Catholic schools.

Our communities have experienced many challenges over the last two years. We can do this for a few more months. The Delta variant is much more contagious than the previous strains and it is impacting our school communities. We also cannot predict what other variants may disrupt our lives in the coming months. We know that our Christian faith gives us hope to endure and that better days will be ahead.

In the Letter to the Hebrews we read, "Lay hold upon the hopes set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast." Our Holy Father, Pope Francis spoke in a video released by the Ad Council this week supporting vaccinations and in part he said, "(It) is a simple yet profound way to care for one another, especially the most vulnerable. I pray to God that each one of us can make his or her own small gesture of love. No matter how small, love is always grand. Small gestures for a better future." United in prayer, let us do everything possible to ensure that we keep one another safe moving forward for a better future.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gary Gelo', written in a cursive style.

Gary Gelo  
Superintendent of Schools