



July 30, 2021

Dear Catholic School Families,

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

July 12th, 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.

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, 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.
- All preschool children (2 years and older) are required to mask indoors (6/24/2021)
- 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, 120175, 120195 and 131080 and other applicable laws. As a public entity, the Fresno County public health order 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 Fresno 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 Education 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 year.

God Bless,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joan Bouchard". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Joan Bouchard
Superintendent of Catholic Schools