



Archdiocese of Newark

Vicar for Education and Interim Superintendent of Schools

February 15, 2022

To All in Our School Communities,

On Monday, February 7, Governor Murphy announced that the school mask mandate will be lifted effective, March 7. This announcement comes as Covid rates in New Jersey continue to decline and Covid vaccines remain widely available for individuals ages 5 years and up. As of Monday, March 7, Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Newark will no longer require students and staff to wear masks. Parents who choose to have their student attend school without a mask are free to do so; likewise, parents may choose to have their student wear a mask at school.

Teachers, staff members, and visitors also will no longer be required to wear masks. All who choose to continue to wear a mask are certainly affirmed in this choice.

This announcement naturally brings questions, and as we move forward, please note the following:

- Schools may need to make some adjustments to school protocols and procedures in the absence of universal masking. These are local decisions made at the discretion of the principal.
- Harassment or ridicule of individuals due to their choice regarding masks will not be tolerated and will be addressed swiftly according to the school disciplinary code.
- Parents who want their child/ren to wear a mask will need to communicate to their child/ren the expectations regarding mask use in school. School personnel are not responsible for regulating mask wearing but will do their best to monitor mask wearing for these students.
- Masks continue to be required on buses since they fall under federal transportation mandates.
- We believe that vaccines are safe, effective, and accessible. We encourage those who are eligible to get vaccinated, to do so. In the absence of universal masking, this is the strongest line of defense against Covid.
- We encourage continued Covid testing, especially if a testing program is at the school.
- Schools reserve the right to require masks if conditions warrant it, such as if there is an increase in Covid cases within the school or local community, or a new statewide mandate.
- It is imperative that parents act responsibly and keep children home if they are sick or experiencing Covid-like symptoms or are required to quarantine due to close contact.
- Individuals experiencing Covid-like symptoms will be sent home from school and their return will be in accordance with school procedures regarding same.

- Schools will be guided by any updated Health Department guidance including any requirements for masking after quarantine.
- Individuals are expected to comply with a mask mandate if one is imposed by any venue used by the school for an event or trip and for transportation provided by a public school district with a mask mandate.

Over the course of the past two years, we have worked together to protect the health and well-being of our students and staff. We appreciate your support and cooperation in the shared efforts to realize academic and spiritual growth while maintaining a safe and welcoming environment. Let us continue to join together in the prayer that the days ahead will be brighter, and the burden will be lighter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Thomas J. McDade".

Reverend Monsignor Thomas J. McDade, Ed.D.
Vicar for Education and Interim Superintendent of Schools

ARCHDIOCESAN CENTER

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