



July 21, 2021

Dear Religious Education Families,

Thank you for your partnership over the past year and a half and your commitment to providing your children with a Catholic education. Looking ahead, we want to share with you anticipated safety protocols and operational guidance for the upcoming academic year.

Protecting the health and safety of our students, parish staff and volunteers while providing them with an excellent, in-person faith formation experience remain our priorities. Based on the guidance of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), consultation from our team of medical advisors, and our Archdiocesan COVID-19 Task Force, we plan a return to largely normal, pre-pandemic operations while maintaining select safety protocols to ensure a healthy, in-person learning environment. As with last year's programming, we will continue to follow the same protocols set forth by the Archdiocese's Office for Catholic Schools. While there remains the potential for some adjustments considering the growing prevalence of the delta variant and stalled vaccination rates, please note the following:

Returning to full pre-pandemic, "normal" operations

- There will no longer be cohorts; however, every classroom will maintain an assigned seating chart since any necessary quarantines will be limited to only the students in closest proximity to any COVID-positive student (i.e., fellow students seated in front, back, left or right).
- No required wellness checks or staggered drop-off/pick-up schedules
- No masks will be required for fully vaccinated students, catechists or staff. Guidance regarding masks for unvaccinated individuals will be released in early August.

Safety protocols for the 2021-2022 school year

- **Students who are ill or are experiencing COVID-19-like symptoms MUST stay home.**
- We will follow prevailing local health department guidelines concerning quarantines.
- Classrooms and activities will be arranged to maintain 3 feet of physical distancing indoors whenever possible.
- Programs will maintain daily cleaning procedures for desks and high traffic areas.
- Students and staff will be encouraged to sanitize hands upon arrival to classroom as a good hygiene practice, as well as use water bottles instead of drinking directly from water fountains.

Lastly, providing proof of vaccination will be extremely helpful for contact tracing purposes and to ensure that vaccinated students, if exposed, are not included in any quarantine requirements. Any student without a COVID-19 vaccination card on file, who is determined to be a close contact, will immediately be quarantined until proof of vaccination is received. Your program's leadership will provide more information about this in the coming weeks. Vaccination information will be kept confidential as with all other student records and medical history.



Again, we expect to have a final determination on the use of masks for unvaccinated individuals by early August. We will re-assess these guidelines, as necessary, during the academic year to ensure safe operations of our schools. For the sake of everyone's health and our collective ability to fully overcome the COVID-19 virus, we will continue to encourage vaccinations for faculty and staff, as well as students over the age of 12.

We wish you all a safe and restful summer,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin Foy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kevin" and the last name "Foy" clearly legible.

Kevin Foy

Director, Office of Lifelong Formation
Archdiocese of Chicago