



Catholic Schools
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February 23, 2022

Dear Catholic Schools Families,

I am writing with good news.

Based on our extremely low infection rates and guidance from our medical advisors, we are making masks optional in our Catholic schools in Chicago, Evanston, and Oak Park, beginning Monday, February 28. With this decision, all Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Chicago will be mask optional, effective Monday.

This coincides with the City of Chicago lifting its indoor mask mandate effective Monday and the relaxation of school COVID mitigations in Oak Park and Evanston.

As you may know, earlier this month we made masks optional in our schools in Lake County and most of suburban Cook County, but continued to require masks elsewhere while we evaluated the situation and discerned next steps. In that time, COVID infections in our schools have continued to plummet – in schools that required masks and ones that did not. We have not had a whole class quarantine in any school in our system at any time in February. Only about a tenth of our schools have even a single case right now. The overwhelming majority of our schools have zero cases.

This progress is a testament to the hard work and cooperation of our school families, educators, and staff. This has been a difficult time for all of us, and I'm grateful for your commitment and patience during this ordeal. Your efforts are paying off.

We know masks are not ideal for student learning and human development. We can feel better knowing that our students will soon be able to learn, grow, and develop more freely in a mask-optional environment.

Of course, COVID-19 has not disappeared from society and other prudent measures are still appropriate. For now, all our other COVID mitigation protocols will continue in place. Students coming out of isolation and quarantine must wear a mask on Days 6 through 10. In addition, we will continue monitoring cases in our schools closely and, if we see significant increases in a classroom or an entire school, we may temporarily return to masks until those numbers go back down.

Any student or staff member who wishes to continue to wear a mask in school is encouraged to do so. We support all school families and employees in whichever decision they make regarding the regular use of masks. Individuals who wish to wear a mask are encouraged to use an N95 mask and we encourage everyone age 5 and above to receive the COVID-19 vaccine/booster.



For two years, our Catholic schools have been a leader providing safe, reliable, in-person instruction. Our principals, teachers, and staff have been true heroes in that effort. I hope you take a moment to thank them when you can. With the number of positive cases in our schools so very low, we are very happy that we can now move to an environment in which masks are optional.

Peace be with you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg Richmond".

Greg Richmond
Superintendent of Schools