
Buffalo Catholic Schools COVID Memo

To: All Catholic School Principals, Presidents, Pastors, Board Chairs, and Canonical Administrators

From: Dr. Tim Uhl

Date: Wed, Aug 11

The Catholic schools of the Diocese of Buffalo are committed to opening the school year on time, in person, and to offering 5 days of classes for every student. The educators, administrators, staff members and volunteers of our Catholic schools are committed to doing everything possible to support the education, growth, maturity and well-being of each and every student. The ongoing pandemic that first confronted us 18 months ago brought with it tremendous challenges for our educators, as well as students and families. Despite these challenges, our Catholic schools experienced daily attendance rates of 95% or better. Even as we continue to face new variants of the COVID-19 virus, we continue to believe that face-to-face instruction is best for our students. With each school district now given responsibility for directing the response of its schools, we (Bishop Michael Fisher and I) would like to clarify our position and our full support for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations.

As the new Delta variant continues to circulate at an accelerated pace, especially among children under age 12, and case numbers continue to rise, we need to be especially diligent in preserving the health of all and supporting the common good. Toward this end, all Catholic schools of the Diocese are asked to require everyone to be masked while indoors and to remain at least 3 feet apart in order to support our determination to maintain 5-day face-to-face instruction. We also believe that it is our Christian obligation to be concerned for the care and well-being of others and to do our part to end this pandemic, something Bishop Fisher has emphasized repeatedly over the past several months. As such, we are advising the following course of action until the pandemic subsides.

We want to convey our unqualified support for vaccinations which is the quickest route to ending this pandemic. In addition to our indoor mask requirement and 3-foot spacing, we believe that the following additional measures will be effective in keeping our students, teachers and staff members safe:

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- Continued emphasis on ventilation and air circulation
 - Increased sanitation measures, including foggers and surface cleaning
 - Encouragement for all sick students and staff members to stay home.
 - If 6 foot spacing can be accomplished and ventilation enhanced, masks can be removed while seated
 - Students can eat 3 feet apart provided there is enhanced ventilation
 - All guests should be required to mask regardless of vaccination status

You can be assured that we, like everyone, want very much for the pandemic to be a thing of the past and to resume life as we once knew it. Yet it is abundantly clear that the pandemic continues to inflict a terrible price in lost lives, chronic health issues, economic hardship, and rising anxiety levels. We appreciate your support and cooperation with these measures aimed at keeping our students in school as much as possible. As the CDC recommendations change, the Diocese and Office of Catholic Schools will update its recommendations and communicate as appropriate.