



Diocese of Knoxville Catholic Schools Preparing Scholars, Leaders, & Saints

July 15, 2021

Dear Catholic School communities,

This past year has taught us a great many things. One idea that has most resonated in my mind lately is that of accompaniment. We have accompanied each other this year as we have learned to navigate the uncharted waters of a global pandemic. We accompanied each other in our faith, in our educational mission, and in our service to one another. While we may have had moments of fear and uncertainty, we have also been comforted by our faithful assurance that Christ is our steadfast companion.

“And it happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him.” (Luke 24: 15-16).

Pope Francis stated, “Like the disciples in the Gospel we were caught off guard by an unexpected, turbulent storm. We have realized that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented, but at the same time important and needed, all of us called to row together, each of us in need of comforting the other.” As these quotes illustrate, we are not alone or in isolation. Our schools are about communion and community and are founded on the moral principle that all people are created by God with dignity and purpose. Being a community of faith is a hallmark of Catholic school education. The Catholic school dimension of community is based on the basic human social need for interaction, as well as, the Church’s defining characteristics of community through the cooperative partnership of the family, the teachers and administrators, the clergy, and the students. As we return to school, it is important for us to continue to demonstrate actions that promote care and concern for others. Just as preparing for the pandemic was not an option, continuing to demonstrate responsive action is not optional. In fact, it flows from our duty as Christians to be of service.

The health and welfare of our students and school communities remains our highest priority and we felt it important to survey our school communities. I want to thank everyone for their strong participation in those surveys. As always, we value you our families and your commitment to our schools! It is critical that all within our school communities are prepared to contribute to the prevention, rapid identification, and mitigation of the spread of COVID-19 in our schools and communities. Relying on the knowledge that we have acquired this past year, the increased medical research available, and the guidance of civil authorities, we have developed the COVID-19 mitigation protocols for the upcoming 2021-2022 school year.

While we will not be offering remote learning this year, we will work diligently to assist any family impacted by Covid-19. It is also important to note that these protocols may need to be changed quickly if environmental factors dictate the need. The Diocese of Knoxville Catholic School COVID-19 Mitigation Policies are included with this letter. For easy reference, below are the main differences from the 2020-2021 School Re-entry policies to the 2021-2022 COVID-19 Mitigation Policies.

- **Health Examination & Vaccinations:** The Diocese of Knoxville does not require COVID-19 vaccinations for employees or students.
- **Screening:** Temperature screening of employees, students, and visitors will not be conducted daily at school. Families are encouraged to conduct temperature screening, along with screening questions, at home for suspected illness. If a student has a temperature of 100.4 or higher, the student should remain at home.
- **Contact Tracing for Positive COVID-19 cases:** The school will conduct contact tracing for confirmed cases of COVID-19 exposure. Students and employees who provide confidential proof of COVID-19 immunizations will not be quarantined because of contact tracing.
- **On-site/face-to-face instruction:** For the holistic development of students, educational delivery will be on-site and face-to-face instruction. The school will work with individual families of children that are ill or require quarantine and cannot attend face-to-face instruction.
- **Visitors/volunteers:** As communities, the schools welcome visitors and volunteers in the school buildings. All visitors will be expected to adhere to specific procedural protocols of each school.
- **Facial Coverings/Masks:** Face mask usage will be at the discretion of the child's parent. However, employees and students should bring protective facial coverings to school daily in case there is a need to wear the masks.
- **Field trips:** Experiential learning through off-campus field trips may resume.

The Diocese of Knoxville Catholic Schools continues to believe that the optimum educational delivery for holistic development of students is on-site and in-school delivery. Therefore, it is our hope that these measures will help keep our communities healthy and our students in school.

In Christ,
Dr. Sedonna Prater
Superintendent of Catholic Schools

