



ST. ANTHONY
—DE PADUA—
CATHOLIC SCHOOL

*St Anthony de Padua Catholic School develops life-long learners
who live their faith through stewardship and are committed to
Catholic virtues and academic excellence.*

August 12, 2021

Dear St. Anthony Families,

Father Ben and I believe our mission is to support parents in their mission of forming children to know, love, and serve the Lord. So we are always open to feedback and suggestions as we serve our parish and school community. We thank everyone who has already shared their perspective, resources, and concerns regarding Covid. We would also like to thank our Covid and school advisory board members who came together to advise us. We believe this is going to be a fantastic school year.

Our Covid team identified three key priorities in making our decision: (1) health and safety (2) emotional well-being and (3) remaining open for in person learning.

Here is a quick summary of what the team has determined in light of the data that our county infection rate is starting to spike:

- We will begin the school year with all students wearing masks while inside the classrooms.
- This precaution is temporary and will be continuously revisited by the executive board as we monitor the infection rate within St. Joseph County.
- Teachers who volunteer proof of vaccination will not be required to wear masks.
- The school will be exploring options to provide students with more space during lunchtime when masks cannot be worn.

Further considerations by the team:

We believe we are many parts, but all one Body. (1Cor 12:20). This decision was not made lightly or with disregard to parental choice. Many of our students cannot receive the vaccination and/or have vulnerable family members. Catholic Social Justice teaching requires we protect and serve those most vulnerable. While there is debate as to the efficacy of masks, we don't have evidence that masks are harmful. We do know students wore masks last year and we did not see high numbers of COVID, or other illnesses, within our school community. And we do know that remote learning is not as effective as classroom learning.



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Our hope is that this policy will minimize the need for students to quarantine, which also impacts our working parents. While there is anxiety, uncertainty, and discrepant information, we feel this protective measure is the best way to prevent illness and anxiety so children can be in school together.

We believe humility is the root of all virtues. We recognize that there is much that is unknown and/or contested regarding this virus and its variants. Masks are a temporary inconvenience while transmission rates in our area are high. Finally, we would rather start with students in masks and be able to relax later.

Our teachers need to talk and communicate with students throughout the day. Given the potential risk compared to the benefits of students being able to see the teacher's face, it was decided vaccinated teachers can remain unmasked. Teachers will be vigilant in providing students space and increased hygiene.

We believe we are always learning. We will constantly be monitoring the infection rate within our county as well as how other schools trend and adjust procedures accordingly.

Following this letter is a more detailed list of our COVID related protocols.

Despite this pause in a return to normal, we are looking forward to an amazing year!

In Mercy, Grace, and Peace
Father Ben, Pastor
And Mrs. Karen Bogol, Principal

Detailed Policy:

Health Screenings

- Parents should conduct daily health screenings of students prior to bringing them to school. If a child displays any symptoms of Covid, he/she should stay home from school and parents should fill out the absence form on-line.
- We will no longer check the temperatures of students upon their arrival at school.



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Masks

- Masks will be worn by students while inside unless eating or drinking.
- Masks will not be required outside.
- Teachers who provide proof of vaccination will not be required to mask.

Classroom Environment and Instruction

- Teachers will keep seating charts in all classes.
- Junior high students will rotate to their teachers' classrooms.
- To the best extent possible, seating charts will be replicated across classes.
- Fridays are no longer early release.
- Absences will be treated as a normal absence and teachers will work with families on make-up work within the parameters of the school handbook.

Drinking Fountains will be closed

- Students should bring filled water bottles labeled with their names.

Lunch and Recess

- We are reviewing ways to have students eat somewhere other than classrooms.
- Classes will be permitted to eat lunch outdoors as weather and supervision permits.
- Students will be distanced as much as possible and seating charts will be kept.
- Students are free to play with students from other classrooms at recess.

Weekly Mass

- Students will attend Mass on Wednesdays and Fridays (preK will not attend right away)
- Students will be spaced to the best of our ability and will be masked.

Visitors

- Visitors who are not vaccinated are asked to wear masks while inside the building.



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- If volunteering in a classroom, volunteers will be masked unless proof of vaccination is on file with administration.

Contact Tracing

Mrs. Maureen Vervaet continues to serve us as our school nurse. Mrs. Vervaet is a licensed nurse, a former St. Anthony parent, a parishioner, and a gracious, generous resource for our community. She supports our faculty and staff in creating a safe learning environment in our building and will communicate with parents about situations involving potential or confirmed positive COVID cases.