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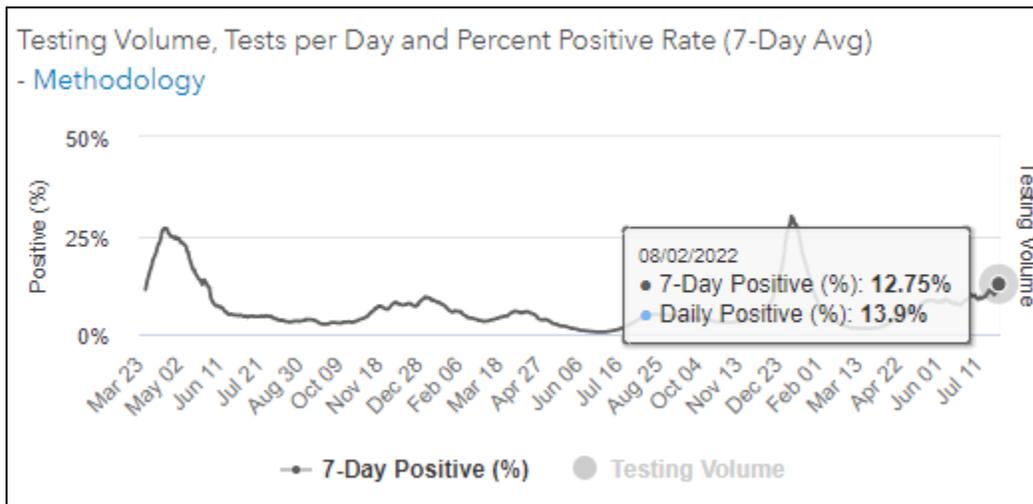
August 16, 2022

Dear Catholic School Parents and Guardians,

I hope this letter finds you and your family well and enjoying a relaxing summer! It was your support and partnership that afforded us the opportunity to safely provide in-person instruction during the 2020-21 and 2021-22 school years and we are looking forward to continuing that partnership for the upcoming school year.

Our theme for the 2022-23 school year is "One Body in Christ." Together with you, as "one body in Christ," we remain committed to the safety and well-being of our students and staff members.

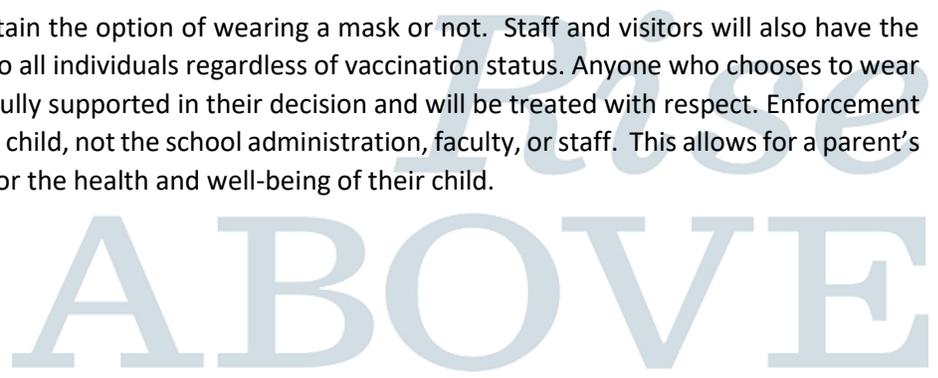
Our Catholic schools operate in nine jurisdictions/counties throughout Maryland, and we continue to monitor each jurisdiction's COVID-19 positivity rate throughout the summer. While we are in a much better position than last summer, we must continue to remain vigilant. The latest coronavirus variant, BA.5 is extremely contagious and continuing to spread throughout all jurisdictions. Recent data from [coronavirus.maryland.gov](https://coronavirus.maryland.gov) indicates a 12.75% average positivity rate across the State, which is considered substantial transmission.



Therefore, as we prepare for the start of the new academic year, I would like to provide a few reminders regarding the COVID-19 policies for the Department of Catholic Schools:

Masking

Students, based on parental choice, will retain the option of wearing a mask or not. Staff and visitors will also have the option to wear a mask or not. This applies to all individuals regardless of vaccination status. Anyone who chooses to wear a mask may continue to do so, and will be fully supported in their decision and will be treated with respect. Enforcement of this choice is between the parent and the child, not the school administration, faculty, or staff. This allows for a parent's personal accountability and responsibility for the health and well-being of their child.





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Hand Hygiene, Respirator Etiquette, and Sanitization

Washing hands can prevent the spread of infectious diseases. Our schools will continue to reinforce proper handwashing behaviors. We will continue to provide handwashing supplies, including soap and water and hand sanitizer. Our schools will continue to reinforce covering coughs and sneezes to help keep individuals from getting and spreading infectious diseases. Our schools will continue to have high touch surfaces cleaned and disinfected on a regular basis.

Isolation and Quarantine

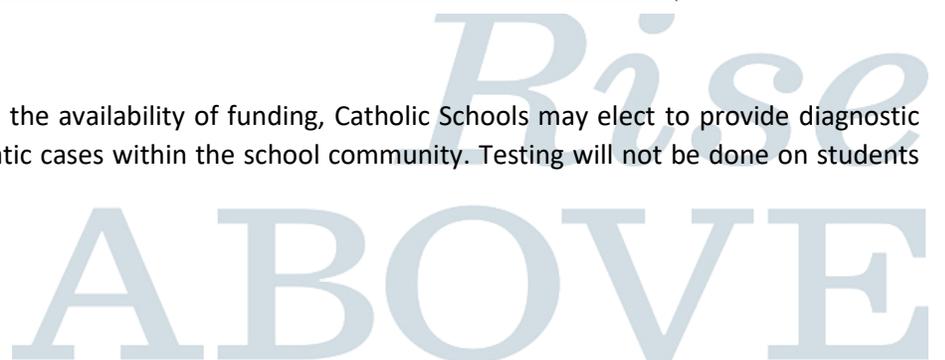
All Catholic Schools will adhere to CDC guidance relative to individuals who test positive for COVID-19 or who has been identified as a close contact outside of the school by a health official. Students and staff who test positive for COVID and those who are unvaccinated and identified as a close contact, are required to wear a mask following their respective period of isolation/quarantine for five additional days. Those who are identified as a close contact, regardless of vaccination status, are not required to quarantine; however, those who can mask should do so for 10 days following the date of exposure. See MDH/MSDE reference below.

**MDH/MSDE Guidance for COVID-19 Symptoms, Isolation, and Quarantine**

Staff or Student/Child with	Guidance for Management
COVID-19 symptoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff or student/child should not attend or work in a school or child care setting</li> <li>COVID-19 testing is recommended</li> <li>If test is negative, may return when symptoms have improved, no fever for 24 hours without medication, and applicable criteria in the <a href="#">Communicable Diseases Summary</a> have been met</li> </ul>
Positive test for COVID-19, regardless of symptoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff or student/child must stay home for 5 days from the start of symptoms or from the date of the positive test if no symptoms</li> <li>After day 5, may return if symptoms have improved and no fever for at least 24 hours without medication</li> <li>Upon return, must wear a mask for 5 additional days (except while eating, drinking, sleeping or outside)</li> <li>If unable to wear a mask, may return if they have a negative test at day 5 or later; otherwise, they should remain at home for days 6 -10</li> </ul>
Close contact with someone with known or suspected COVID-19 but no symptoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff or student/child can continue to work in or attend school and child care regardless of vaccination status</li> <li>Those who can mask should do so for 10 days from the last day of exposure</li> <li>A test at 3-5 days after exposure is recommended, especially for those who cannot mask (ex. children under 2 years of age).</li> </ul>

COVID-19 Testing

On a school-by-school basis, and based on the availability of funding, Catholic Schools may elect to provide diagnostic rapid antigen testing to confirm symptomatic cases within the school community. Testing will not be done on students without parental consent.





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### COVID Vaccinations

COVID vaccinations are not mandated in our schools; however, we encourage vaccination for all eligible students and staff to reduce the potential for serious illness and hospitalization.

Please continue to remain vigilant and monitor the health of the members of your household over the summer. Our ability to offer in person instruction is dependent upon your partnership. If a child is exhibiting symptoms of COVID, RSV, or influenza, they should remain home to avoid exposing the school community to illness. If there is a family member in the same household with symptoms, the students from that household should remain home until the other individual is beyond the 5 days or they should test the child at home each day before sending the student to school.

Thank you for your partnership and support!

One in Christ,

Dr. Donna Hargens  
Superintendent of Catholic Schools

*Rise*  
ABOVE