



THE DIOCESE OF HOUMA THIBODAUX

OFFICE OF BISHOP SHELTON J. FABRE

August 3, 2021

To the Catholic Schools Family of the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux:

In full alignment with the most recent federal and state guidance, including the directives announced by Governor John Bel Edwards Monday, I am providing this updated list of safety protocols as our Catholic schools' family in the diocese begins their safe return to our classrooms this week.

As our Superintendent of Catholic Schools Suzanne Delaune Troxclair stated in her column in the August issue of the *Bayou Catholic*, "as we embark on the 2021-2022 school year, we do it with great anticipation, hope, and the awesome responsibility of forming students who will go out into our world and spread the Good News!"

Our priorities during the last school year remain the same this year as we chart a path to in-classroom instruction so employees, students, and families feel as safe as possible and to reduce the impact of COVID-19 conditions. Those priorities are safety, presence, and growth.

- *SAFETY* - The diocese is committed to utilizing appropriate safety measures in the context of a safe return to work and schools.
- *PRESENCE* - The diocese is committed to in-classroom instruction in collaboration with our Return to School Task Force and our medical partners, Terrebonne General Health System and Thibodaux Regional Health System.
- *GROWTH* - The diocese wants our children to continue their academic progress and faith formation in a safe, secure, and Christ-centered environment in our schools as we work in the ministry of Catholic education to form the whole child.

Those preparations include the careful consideration of the many protocols recommended by the Centers for Disease Control, the Louisiana Department of Health, the Louisiana Department of Education, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and our local and state leaders.

We are announcing the following protocols for Catholic schools in the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux for the start of the 2021-2022 school year (**new directives from the previous July 27 communication are in all bold**):



- Terrebonne General Health System and Thibodaux Regional Health System will again assist our Catholic schools in aspects of any COVID-19 infections or outbreaks in our Catholic schools.
- Students and employees who are sick should stay home (regardless of illness).
- Those with COVID-19 are required to stay home until they have recovered and have been determined to no longer be infectious according to the CDC's end of isolation criteria.
- **Inside school facilities, masks are mandated for all employees and students age 5 and above, and all children enrolled in a kindergarten program. Any child between the ages of 2 and 5 who is not enrolled in a kindergarten program is strongly encouraged to wear a face covering.**
- While outdoors, all fully vaccinated and unvaccinated adults and students do not need to mask if they adhere to physical distancing requirements. It is strongly encouraged that unvaccinated individuals wear masks in crowded outdoor settings or during activities that involve sustained close contact with people who are not fully vaccinated.
- Buses are allowed to operate at 100% capacity, and, as required by Presidential Executive Order No. 13998, ALL passengers MUST wear a mask, regardless of bus capacity or vaccination status.
- Schools will continue to provide adequate access to hygienic supplies and maintain sanitizing and proper hygiene measures.

Considering the fluidity of the situation, these guidelines are based on the current medical knowledge of the transmission of COVID-19 and may change at any time in accordance with updates from the CDC, the LA Department of Health, the LA Department of Education, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE), or our local medical partners and leaders.

Sincerely in the Lord,

Most Reverend Shelton J. Fabre
Bishop of Houma-Thibodaux