

Diocese of Baton Rouge
Catholic School Policy for Returning to School 2021-22
Updated August 5, 2021

Catholic schools in the Diocese of Baton Rouge returned to school during the 2020-21 school year on time and in person, providing classes on sites throughout the school year. The success of the year was due in large part to the efforts of school staff in creating practices that ensured safety. As we prepare to return to school for the 2021-22 school year, we continue to be guided by two goals:

- Ensuring that each day everyone in our schools (especially children, faculty, and staff) is as safe as possible; and,
- Keeping our elementary and high schools open for in-class learning with minimal disruption.

According to the State Department of Education's current guidance for returning to school this year, students and staff will generally follow the protocols in place as the last school year ended. With that understanding, the following policies for school operation are not intended to replace the state's current guidance, but to provide clarity in several areas. Schools should reference *Ready to Achieve!* and any updates to that guidance as they formulate, implement, and adjust safety protocols throughout the school year.

- **Face Masks:** The correct use of facemasks is required for students in Grades K - 12 and all adults while indoors and strongly encouraged for students in all grade levels below kindergarten. All students being transported by bus must wear face masks, regardless of their grade level.
- **Distancing:** Physical distancing and cohort groupings should be utilized to minimize contact between student groups or individuals, including in shared indoor spaces. In classrooms, students should be seated at least 3-feet apart. In common areas, when eating, and when engaging in activities with increased exhalation (i.e., singing, shouting, band practice, sports, or exercise), students should try to maintain physical distance of 6-feet apart as much as possible. Further, these activities should continue to be held outdoors or in large, well-ventilated spaces whenever possible. School buses may operate at 100% capacity if all student passengers are masked, the windows are open, and assigned seating charts are utilized and enforced. Adults are to remain 6-feet apart from students and other adults, if possible.
- **Temperature Check & Illness:** Students and adults do not need to be checked for temperature when coming on campus. Instead, self-monitoring of adults and parental screening of children prior to arrival at campus is required. If a student or adult has a temperature or is ill, they must immediately be moved to an isolation area and sent home.
- **Symptoms on Campus:** Schools should establish an isolation area for individuals who display any symptoms of illness so that contact with others is limited as much as possible.
- **Quarantine:**
 - Individuals must quarantine if they have been in [close contact](#) with a case (within 6 feet of an infected person for a total of 15 minutes during a 24-hour period), unless they are asymptomatic and choose to show documentation of vaccination or of a positive COVID-19 test taken through a medical facility within the last 90 days.
 - Schools will have a modified 10-day quarantine for all students. For the 10-day modified quarantine, asymptomatic students may return after 10-days and only participate in classroom instruction. Participation in activities with a higher risk of spreading the virus (i.e., extra-curricular or co-curricular activities, including sports teams, PE class, music instruction, field trips, etc.) are not allowed until after the 14-day period.

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- Students in quarantine may have the support of virtual or online learning within the school's policy.
- **Contact Tracing:** In accordance with the *School Reporting and Data Sharing Order #2020-COVID19-001*, all COVID-19 cases should be reported to the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) via LDH's electronic reporting system.
- **Activities:** Field trips can be part of the school's activities within current guidelines of masking, cohort grouping, and transportation requirements. Band and Vocal Music activities may be held indoors or outdoors within physical-distancing, masking, and instrument-covering provisions in accordance with guidance approved by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. Catholic School Athletic Association and Louisiana High School Athletic Association sports programs may resume within the guidance of *Ready to Achieve*. Concerts, athletic events, and other gatherings can be held with guidance found at <https://opensafely.la.gov/>.
- **Visitors to Campus:** Schools should consider limiting nonessential visitors, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations as much as possible. All visitors should follow current requirements in the state of Louisiana for masking and physical distancing while on campus.
- **Child Nutrition Program:** Breakfast, lunch, and after-school meals will be provided at no cost to all students during the 2021–2022 school year. Grab-n-go packaged meals such as cereal bars, pop tarts, muffins, fruit, juice, and milk will be available for breakfast. Students will be afforded a main dish and/or menu choices for lunch, which will be provided through the cafeteria serving line. Extra items may also be purchased through the student's cafeteria account, which can be funded through www.myschoolbucks.com. After-school meals will be distributed to the program director at each site. Principals are to determine where students eat lunch within state guidelines.

Thanks to principals for collaborating in creation of this policy document. Also, the Diocese is grateful to pastors, school leaders, faculty, staff, advisory board members, parents, and students for their vigilance in embracing health and safety practices to protect others in the community. Only through care for our brothers and sisters in Christ during this pandemic are we able to continue to enjoy learning communities that *Evangelize Hearts, Educate Minds, Encourage Talent, and Embrace the Future*.