

August 11, 2021



Back to School at St. Francis of Assisi

Introduction: As our conditions and governing mandates in St. Louis County are continuously changing, we have developed a flexible, multi-layered protocol to achieve our goals of keeping students, staff, and volunteers safe AND remaining in school. The updated guidance from the Archdiocese suggested a flexibility for those schools located in St. Louis County. This also supports the wide range of responses I've received from parent survey feedback, parish healthcare worker feedback, staff feedback and School Board feedback. The St. Louis County Health Department remains the governing body regarding quarantines. I will still be required to contact them, as well as the Archdiocese, when exposures occur and they will direct me in next steps. Our protocols must work toward both goals of trying to be safe AND remaining in-person for learning. 100% of our teaching staff is vaccinated which should help teachers not to have to quarantine if there is an exposure as long as they don't have symptoms.

Earlier this week, the St. Louis County Department of Public Health released their "Isolation and Quarantine Requirements for K-12 School Settings." This policy was developed with Superintendents from all of the schools in St. Louis County in conjunction with the health officials. The purpose was to use the data from last school year to come up with a plan in our current context of cases that would allow for our students to safely remain in school even if there would be an exposure, thus limiting the effects of quarantine both on student learning loss and on parent work loss. To qualify for the modified quarantine option, which significantly reduces the risk of quarantine, a school must have a universal masking policy at this time, along with social distancing, sanitizing and healthy hygiene practices. This does not mean that they can't take mask breaks and there are times where they won't need to wear a mask (lunch, outdoors, PE) due to the larger space, shorter time frames near one another, and moving air flow.

Family Surveys Regarding Masking: Thank you to 163 people who responded to the family survey about wearing masks. The results were split, as I expected. While about a third of the families that responded frequently or always require their children to wear masks, about one half of the families expect masks to be worn at school when Covid numbers are high in the community. There were some who felt strongly one way or the other but there were some commonalities in comments as well. Many families commented on how well we did last year with the protocols we had in place and many stated that they really wanted their children to be able to learn in-person and whatever it took for that to happen they would support.

Continued cleaning and sanitizing: Hand sanitizing and cleaning protocols will remain in effect. Last year we invested in hypochlorous-acid (HOCl) generators and sprayers to assist with our disease-control protocols. In their 2021 report, The World Health Organization, noted that "HOCl has emerged in the current pandemic as the most potent and environmentally safe disinfectant available and with a wide range of efficacy against many human pathogens, including the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus." We will continue to use our sprayers to disinfect between groups throughout the building. As we saw far fewer illnesses in general last year, we wish to continue that trend.

August 11, 2021

Arrival and Dismissal:

We will NOT conduct health screenings prior to drop off (NO APP or forms). Parents should keep their child home if they are ill or exhibiting symptoms of being ill (eg: fever, uncontrollable cough, sore throat, vomiting, diarrhea). We were a much healthier group as a whole last year because parents were very cooperative with this. It is our expectation that if you are dropping your child off, you have screened their health prior to doing so and have found them not to have problematic symptoms. Please feel free to ask a staff member at drop off if you aren't sure.

Water Bottles: Please continue to bring water bottles. We do have filling stations located throughout the school.

How to use the tiers:

The CDC is monitoring community transmission levels according to school district boundaries to give guidance to school leaders. This is updated every two weeks. (<https://data.stlouisco.com/apps/stlcoqis::covid-19-cases-by-zip-code-in-stl-county/explore>) We will check rates every two weeks to see how cases are trending and make a decision based on the latest data. We will be using the Mehlville zip codes since that is where the majority of our students reside. Currently transmission metrics are high in the Mehlville School District area. When transmission metrics are high - the red-yellow chart is used. This means that under most circumstances masks are required for all, but because we have the luxury of having a variety of learning areas, such as outdoor learning areas, larger learning suites, and other barriers such as plexiglass, we can offer students more mask breaks if they want to take their masks off in those contexts.

There are 5 key mitigation strategies recommended to schools by the CDC: Consistent and correct use of masks, social distancing to the largest extent possible, hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, cleaning and disinfection, and contact tracing in collaboration with the local health department. As we watch transmission rates decrease, we'll gradually add more flexibility with the goal of honoring parent wishes regarding masking while continuing to use the other mitigation strategies.

Medical needs preventing masking: Should your child have a medical condition that prevents him or her from being able to wear a mask or requires some special adaptation, the medical doctor who actually treats your child for the condition must write a letter stating specifically the need and any adaptations that need to be made due to that condition. We will then work with you to address that need.

Covid screenings: Only Covid test results administered in a medical facility will be accepted. No at-home Covid screening results will be accepted.

August 11, 2021

Context-Driven Response to Mask Wearing **subject to change as guidance and situations change**

Masks are Optional Students may choose to wear a mask but it is not required. Examples	Masks are Situational Students will be asked to wear a mask for a specific situation. Examples	Masks are Required All students vaccinated and unvaccinated are required to wear a mask.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community levels of positive cases are low as indicated by CDCs transmission metrics Outdoor learning Outdoor recess Behind plexiglass or face shield Eating and drinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When working closely with others When in room with mixed cohorts Indoor recess and PE when we can't social distance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community positivity levels are high as indicated by CDCs transmission metrics When gathered in the gym after morning drop off Lining up and moving about the building Working in close proximity

When community positivity levels are high:

Masks are Required All students vaccinated and unvaccinated are required to wear a mask.	Masks are Situational Students may choose to remove their mask for specific situations Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community levels of positive cases are high as indicated by CDCs transmission metrics When gathered in the gym after morning drop off Lining up and moving about the building In most contexts in the classroom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outdoor learning Outdoor recess Behind plexiglass or face shield Consistently > 4 feet between students Eating and drinking

When community positivity levels are low:

Masks are Optional Parents choose: Students may choose to wear a mask but it is not required. Examples	Masks are Situational Students will be asked to wear a mask for a specific situation or short period of time. Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community levels of positive cases are low as indicated by CDCs transmission metrics In most contexts in the classroom or with cohort Outdoor recess and learning Behind plexiglass or face shield Eating and drinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When gathering in the gym after morning drop off Moving within the building with other cohorts When working closely with others When in room with mixed cohorts Indoor recess and PE when we can't social distance