



August 24, 2021

Parents and Guardians:

As the new school year is two weeks away, we are looking forward to welcoming your children back to school and most especially to full in-person instruction.

As you know, in the last three weeks, the level of COVID-19 in our five-county area has risen from low to high due to the spread of the Delta variant. The number of daily cases in Pennsylvania is three times higher now than it was at this same time last year when vaccines were not even available.

Following the advice of the CDC, the guidance of all local health departments encompassing our region, and in the interest of ensuring a safe return to school, we will be requiring the use of masks for all high school students, faculty, staff, and visitors starting August 30.

We hope this requirement will be temporary. This policy decision will be reviewed every two weeks based on the level of community transmission, which may vary from county to county. As more individuals are vaccinated, we expect that the level of COVID-19 in our community will be reduced. Should transmission levels allow, we will return to our original plan, which you received in the July 27<sup>th</sup> letter, in which masks would be recommended for unvaccinated individuals.

Masks will not be required when eating or while outdoors. In situations where masks are not required, they may be worn as a matter of personal choice. Parents and guardians may submit a doctor's note to their principal if a medical condition prevents a mask from being used.

In all of our COVID-19 mitigation planning, the safety of your children has been the primary focus. That is why we believe the masking requirement is necessary at this time. A safe school environment will also help us with our goal of providing in-person instruction, five days a week with as little disruption as possible. The health departments for three of the five counties have indicated that they will not require students to quarantine if they are exposed to COVID-19 provided that there is three feet distancing *and* that masks are properly used. We have ample evidence from last year that masking works as a preventative measure.

We recognize that some individuals may support this decision and that others may not. We know that challenges have been ongoing on many fronts. All of us are fatigued by the impact of the virus, but we ask you to continue to work with us as we navigate this pandemic. It has caused all of us to make sacrifices, but working together we successfully managed to keep school communities safe while allowing Catholic education to flourish last year. We promise to work equally hard this year to ensure that your child has a safe and successful school year.

As was shared last month, if you have not received a COVID-19 vaccine, we strongly encourage you to obtain a vaccine for every eligible member of your family. Our Holy Father recently produced a beautiful [video message](#) in which he and other Church leaders from around the world encourage vaccination as an act of love and charity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Irene Horstmann Hannan".

Irene Horstmann Hannan  
CEO, Faith in the Future Foundation

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sister Maureen L. McDermott, IHM, Ph.D.".

Sister Maureen L. McDermott, IHM, Ph.D.  
Superintendent of Secondary Schools