



**Department of
Catholic Education**

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August 9, 2021

Dear Family, Faculty, and Staff of our Catholic Schools,

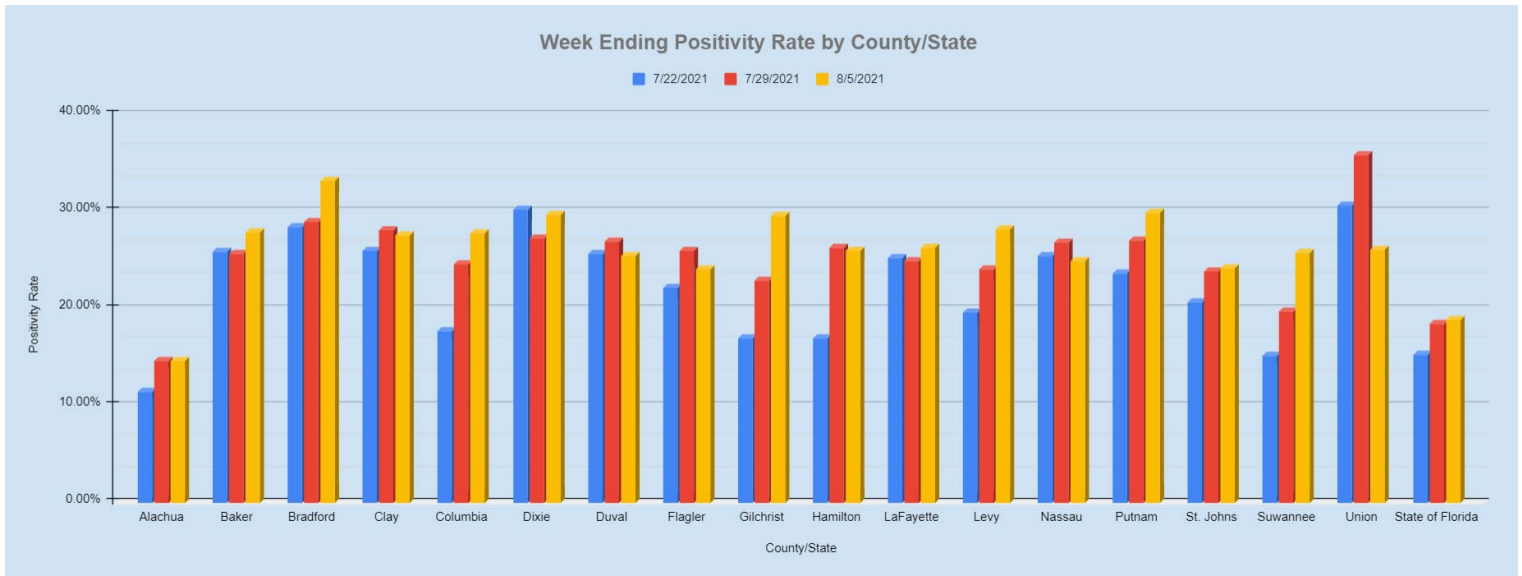
The COVID-19 global pandemic is evolving daily and affecting the opening of our Catholic schools this week. *We had hoped to have masks optional for everyone as we begin this school year, but due to safety concerns, we have had to revisit our COVID-19 protocols. The safety of everyone is our first priority.*

We are sending you this letter to address the new protocols for the 2021-2022 school year, but please know that we will be reviewing our protocols weekly as we move to make masks optional for everyone as quickly as possible.

Our office continues to work closely with the Florida Department of Health to ensure a safe learning environment for everyone. Last Friday, we learned that the Executive Order 21-175 does not apply to non-public schools, as we were originally led to believe. Therefore, we have revised our policy to align with the Florida Department of Health (FLDOH), American Academy of Pediatrics, and the Centers for Disease Control regarding best practices in slowing the spread of this virus. The delta variant and others that have been identified recently have been infecting children at a higher rate, and most of our student population (12 and under) is unable to be vaccinated.

The following is the new policy, which supersedes all other policies, **effective August 10, 2021**, which has been approved by Bishop Felipe Estévez for all Catholic schools of the diocese. *This policy is subject to change as we monitor the pandemic.*

- As we begin the school year, masks will be required indoors for all employees, faculty, staff, and students (5 years of age and older) based on data from the FLDOH (<https://floridahealthcovid19.gov/>), which will be analyzed weekly. A county that has a positivity rate of ten percent or less will move to masks optional. If the positivity rate increases, exceeding ten percent again, masks will be restored. Our office will maintain a status page for our schools in each county at www.dosaeducation.org/covid-19.



- All visitors will be required to wear masks, and we will limit the number of visitors to the campus at this time.
- COVID-19 vaccinations remain optional but are strongly encouraged.
- All positive cases at a school will be reported to the Office of the Superintendent for follow-up with the FLDOH.
- Families will be notified of every positive case at a school.

I cannot stress this enough: *we need to continue to pray for the end of this pandemic and for each other. It will take all of us to stop the spread of this virus, and vaccinations are critical to the endeavor. Like Polio, Measles, and so many other viruses, we have beat them by vaccinating against such horrific illnesses. If you are not vaccinated, please consider doing so for the sake of your children and neighbors.*

Thank you for the sacrifices you make every day to teach in a Catholic school or to send your children to a Catholic school. Parents/Guardians, please be assured that the children are being loved and given a quality education each day.

Please direct all calls and questions about these protocols to your school principal rather than the Office of the Bishop.

God bless you all,

Deacon Scott J. Conway
Deacon Scott J. Conway
Superintendent of Catholic Schools

Mrs. Rhonda Rose
Rhonda Rose
Assistant Superintendent of Catholic Schools

