



Catholic Schools
A Faith-Based Education
that Lasts a Lifetime

February 5, 2021

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I am writing to you today regarding the COVID-19 vaccine, now available to our school personnel in the District of Columbia and the state of Maryland. Leadership in the Archdiocese of Washington worked hard over the past few weeks to collaborate with local health departments across the region to safeguard our Catholic school employees having equal access to the vaccine under Phase 1B of distribution.

The availability of the vaccine, in our more densely populated areas of the archdiocese, will take several weeks in order to meet the need of teachers and staff that desire the vaccine. The majority of our Catholic schools were among the first to bring students back into buildings and have provided in-person learning since September. Therefore, we are concerned that educational staff in non-public and parochial schools would have to wait until an unidentified later date to receive the vaccination. It is our hope that our school personnel in the District of Columbia are treated equally to our public school counterparts in receiving the vaccination.

The vaccine for our educators, staff and students is currently voluntary. This decision, reached by the Archdiocese of Washington, falls in alignment with current government practices and expectations.

To continue our commitment to safety in our schools, safety protocols will still be required, although individuals are fully vaccinated, until enough people are vaccinated and the spread of the virus is significantly under control. Therefore, face coverings, physical distancing, avoiding crowds, and washing hands regularly will continue through the 2020-2021 school year. These safety measures have been successful in keeping positive cases across the archdiocese, for children and adults, at very low rate compared to District and county rising numbers. We also successfully maintained lower case rates after the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays, so I also want to thank you for your efforts and sacrifices as parents to limit exposures to your family. I ask that you please continue to be vigilant with safety protocols to prevent additional cases of the virus in our communities.

As we approach the end of *Catholic Schools Week*, I know our events and celebrations have been different from years past. Our traditional liturgical gatherings as a whole school community may not have occurred, but we will still celebrate our Faith together. Our spelling and geography bees, science fairs and STEM demonstrations have taken place in safe, socially-distant ways, but we still celebrated Excellence. Finally, we may not have helped in soup kitchens, food pantries or visited nursing homes, but we will still found ways to be of Service in our Communities. We celebrated our Faith, Excellence and Community because Catholic schools have the awesome purpose to form students to be good citizens of the world, love God and neighbor and enrich society with the leaven of the Gospel and by examples of faith.

ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

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The pandemic continues, but with vaccines becoming more readily available to the general population, we will, hopefully, soon see our school life back to normal. In the meantime, please know that we, in the Catholic Schools Office, are working to provide your school leaders with as much support as possible so that they may continue their excellent work of maintaining safe and healthy school communities.

May God continue to bless our #ADWcommUNITY and I pray you have a wonderful Catholic Schools Week 2021!

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K Branaman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kelly Branaman
Secretary for Catholic Schools
Superintendent of Schools