



United in Christ to ignite the joy of faith, community, and learning.

July 20, 2021

Dear St. Stephen the Martyr staff and families,

I want to begin by thanking you for your support of our school and especially throughout the past school year. The year was indeed challenging for many reasons, but I do feel we grew closer as a school community as a result. Once again, we are all in “limbo” waiting to hear what the guidance will be for COVID-19 recommendations for the fall. I recognize that as a diverse community there are different opinions about what the school year should look like. I respect your views and understand that all of you want what is best for your children and families. I thank you for participating in the survey, and I have shared the feedback during recent meetings. Although no plan will make everyone “happy”, nor will it meet the needs of all individuals, we are doing our best to open school under the guided direction of our community leaders.

We believe in person instruction is the best way for our students to receive a faith-based education, interact socially with peers, and be enriched by positive consistent routines. Our ability to keep students and staff safe is a shared responsibility that is dependent on all of us to do our part. The CDC, DHHS, NDE, CSO, and The American Academy of Pediatrics continue to provide recommendations to help us keep students and staff safe while in the school environment. We will rely on local agencies to make the best decisions for our students based on local conditions and current spread within our community. Over the summer, masks have been optional within parish and school activities, including KidZone. To date, there have been no reported positive cases.

At this time, we have not made a decision on masking. It is still too early to know where we will be in August in terms of COVID-19 cases in our area. Additionally, we cannot ignore that the Delta Variant is active in many communities and is therefore a concern. We are encouraged that almost all staff members are vaccinated, and from the survey, we learned most of our middle school students will be vaccinated as well by the start of the school year. Over the next weeks, we will continue to evaluate the situation, gather guidance from local agencies and we welcome your feedback and value your input to help us develop a plan. I will continue to keep you informed as I receive additional information, and you can expect a final decision on masking by the week of August 9th.

I understand that simply reading this may create anxiety and stress. We all desire ‘the way things used to be’ and hope for more “normalcy” this year. However, we know that our Catholic communities are strong and vibrant; we stand together in times of stress and we know that God the Father will guide our path and will give us the tools we need as we continue on this journey. We all want what is best for the students and staff of St. Stephen the Martyr, and we remain grateful for your support and cooperation as we plan for the 2021-2022 school year.

Mrs. Perrault and Mr. Verraneault