January 26, 2022

Dear Catholic School Parents,

Thank you for your letter of January 25. We always welcome thoughts and concerns by our parents, as we work together to educate children and help them mature as disciples of Jesus Christ.

All of us involved in Catholic education wholeheartedly believe that the ideal educational environment for children involves in-person learning in the classroom setting with students and teachers interacting without masks. We also are equally convinced that in-person learning by children in a classroom setting is far superior than remote, online learning. Our Catholic schools were some of the first schools to return to in-person learning following the lockdowns, even though health authorities required masking as a pre-condition to the return to in-person learning. And last year the Catholic schools were again some of the first schools to transition to a mask-optional environment. Currently most of the Catholic schools in our diocese are mask optional.

We can assure all of our parents that as Catholic educators we prefer to educate children in an in-person environment without mandating that our students wear masks. Our past actions have demonstrated this, as our Catholic schools have been leaders in returning to a pre-Covid educational environment. And though we hope to continue teaching in a mask-optional environment, we cannot guarantee that masking will never again be temporarily implemented, or that there are no circumstances under which masking might again be temporarily required. Thus, if the future presents our schools with an outbreak of some virus that causes federal, state, or local authorities to mandate the wearing of masks as a condition to continuing in-person learning, we would have to take such steps to ensure in-person learning could continue safely. Our schools cannot be in a position of contractually agreeing to refuse to act in a way that may be mandated by law or otherwise dictated by prudence and best medical advice for the safety of our school communities. Such a position would be wholly irresponsible on our part.

We do thank you for entrusting your children to our care. We take this responsibility very seriously. And if you have any further concerns, feel free to share them with your respective school leaders.

Sincerely,

Pierre N. Antoine
Superintendent of Schools

cc: Most Reverend Bishop David P. Talley, M.S.W., J.C.D. Pastors
     Dr. Colleen Butterick, Director of School Counseling Services
     Sandra Goldstein, Director, Office of Human Resources
     Rick Ouellette, Director, Office of Communications
     Margaret Scott, Executive Assistant to Bishop David P. Talley